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FOREWORD

By C. DAY LEWIS

TO compile an anthology is always a courageous act: when the anthology represents seven centuries of English poetry, you might call it a foolhardy one. The catch, though, is in that word 'represents'. A poet is not a political constituency: you could only represent *him* by printing all his good poems, and some of his bad ones too; in fact, what an anthology is chiefly representative of is its compiler's own taste and sense of relationship. Miss Herron commends herself to me by including a fair share of 20th-century verse. She does not subscribe to the too common English belief that the only good poet is a dead poet. Naturally I quarrel with some of her selections: nothing by Mr X? surely that poem by Mr Y is not really quite up to the mark? But I would fight to the death for her right to choose the poems she likes, rather than the poems which Mr Z, that sapient critic, tells her are approved by all the best people. Another admirable quality—she is not afraid of the familiar. A good poem, since it is a living thing, adapts itself a little to its context, just as a human being will be modified by the company in which he finds himself. This is one of the justifications of anthology-making, that it may show us 'hackneyed' poems in a fresh light—the light reflected on it from the poems grouped around it: and this is where the compiler's sense of relationship comes in. Miss Herron's, however, is more than an interesting rearrangement of 'anthology pieces': her reading, as well as her scope, has clearly been wide, and there are many poems here which will be unfamiliar to most readers.

How should one read an anthology? First, I suggest, get by heart the salutary words of Charles Williams which are printed opposite the title-page. Then begin at the beginning, and browse ahead until you find 'yourself arrested by a poem. Brood upon this poem: if

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Every care has been taken to make this list complete, but if any necessary acknowledgment should have been omitted, this will be amended at the first opportunity.

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LYRICAL POETRY

I

Anonymous lyrics, 14th-
16th century

1. Come dance with me
2. Spring is come
3. *A maiden in the moor lay*
4. Winter wakens all my care
5. A cradle song
6. The Christ Mother in the stable
7. To the Child Jesus
8. A Lullaby for Jesus
9. Lully, lulley
10. I sing of a maiden
11. Adam lay in bondage
12. I have twelfe oxen
13. Come home again
14. In the vale of restles mynd
15. By-low, my babe
16. O western wind
17. Hey nonny no!
18. My lady is a pretty one
19. A Christmas Carol
20. The lily, the rose
21. The holly and the ivy
22. I had a little nut tree

William Cornish
Thomas Wyatt

23. Pleasure it is
24. What should I say?
25. And wilt thou leave me thus
26. My lute, awake
27. The Balade she made in Newgate
28. Sing lullaby
29. Now what is love?
30. In Youth is Pleasure

Anne Askewe
George Gascoigne
Walter Raleigh
Robert Wever
Anonymous
Philip Sidney

31. *As ye came from the Holy Land*
32. Night hath closed all in her cloak
33. Who is it that this dark night
34. Sleep, Baby mine
35. The Lover's Litany
36. The Cobbler's *Song*
37. Back and as hae wi' Wallace bled
38. Beauty sae Mary
39. Come, b'Lealey

Charles Tilney
John Still
Anthony Munday
Lancelot Andrewes

John Lyly	40. What bird so sings
Thomas Lodge	41. Cupid and my Campaspe
George Peele	42. Love in my bosom like a bee
	43. For pity, pretty eyes
	44. A Voice from the Well
	45. Bethsabe's Song
	46. Song of Oenone and Paris
Robert Greene	47. A Farewell to Arms
Samuel Daniel	48. The Shepherd's Wife's Song
	49. Love is a sickness full of woes
Christopher Marlowe	50. Are they shadows that we see?
Henry Constable	51. The Passionate Shepherd to his Love
Anonymous	52. Diaphenia, like the daffadowndilly
	53. God be in my head
	54. Hierusalem, my happy home
	55. Lady Greensleeves
	56. Madrigal. My love in her attire
	57. A Pedlar
	58. Tears
	59. There is a Lady sweet and kind
	60. See, see, mine own sweet jewel
	61. A Wooing Song
William Shakespeare	62. Who is Sylvia?
	63. When icicles hang by the wall
	64. Two Fairy Songs
	65. Tell me, where is Fancy bred
	66. Sigh no more, ladies
	67. Two songs of Amiens
	68. It was a lover and his lass
	69. Feste's Songs
	70. Take, O! take those lips away
	71. Hark, hark, the lark
	72. Fear no more the heat o' the sun
	73. Ariel's three songs
	74. Roses, their sharp spines being gone
Thomas Campion	75. There is a garden in her face
	76. Follow thy fair sun
	77. Follow your saint
	78. Kind are her answers
	79. When thou must home
Sir Henry Wotton	80. You meaner beauties of the night
Thomas Dekker	81. Art thou poor, yet hast thou golde slumbers?
	82. Dirge for Narcissus
	83. Hymn to Diana
	84. The Triumph
	85. Love and Death

- John Fletcher
John Webster
Richard, Bishop Corbet
Francis Beaumont
William Drummond
Thomas Carew

Anonymous

Thomas Heywood
George Wither
Robert Herrick

William Davenant

John Milton

Edmund Waller
Sir John Suckling

James Graham, Marquess of
Montrose
Richard Lovelace
John Bunyan
John Dryden

Thomas Durfey
John Gay
Joseph Addison
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Robert Burns

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87. The Passionate Man's Song
88. All the Flowers of the Spring
89. The Fairies Farewell
90. Aspatia's Song
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92. Ask me no more
93. Would you know what's soft?
94. Madrigal. O softly singing lute
95. My Dancing Day
96. Pack, clouds, away
97. Shall I, wasting in despair
98. Phoebus, when that I a verse
99. My faithful friend, if you can see
100. Upon Julia's Voice
101. Upon Julia's Hair
102. The Night-piece to Julia
103. How Lilies came White
104. His Prayer to Ben Jonson
105. Divination by a Daffadill
106. To Meddowes
107. Upon a Virgin
108. Eternity
109. The lark now leaves his war'ry nest
110. Wake all the dead!
111. Song on May Morning
112. Song from *Arcades*
113. Sabrina fair
114. Go, lovely Rose
115. Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
116. Out upon it, I have lov'd

117. My dear and only Love
118. Going to the Wars
119. The Shepherd Boy sings
120. Diana's Hunting Song
121. A Song for St. Cecilia's Day
122. All, all of a piece
123. I'll sail upon the Dog-star
124. Song from *The Beggar's Opera*
125. The Spacious Firmament on high
126. Our God, our Help in Ages past
127. God moves in a mysterious way
128. Up in the morning's no' for me
129. Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled
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 225. Take all my loves, my Love
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	412. The Worn Clothes
Martyn Skinner	413. Nay, Alex, be not vexed
Alun Lewis	414. Postscript; to Gweno
	415. Infantry
Norman Nicholson	416. Bombing Practice
	417. The Blackberry
E. M. Barraud	418. My shadow is ten yards high
Henry Treece	419. Walking at Night
Dylan Thomas	420. We lying by the sea and
David Gascoyne	421. Ex Nihilo
Sidney Keyes	422. War Poet
	423. William Wordsworth
	424. Death and the Plowman
	425. A hope for those separated by war

NARRATIVE POETRY

I

THE BALLAD

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. St. Stephen | X. O waly, waly |
| II. The Three Ravens | XI. Helen of Kirconnell |
| III. In somer when the shawes be
shene | XII. Edward |
| IV. Robin Hood and the Tanner | XIII. Sweet William and May
Margret |
| V. Get Up and Bar the Door | XIV. The Bonny Earl of Murray |
| VI. A Lyke-Wake Dirge | XV. The Death of Admiral
Benbow |
| VII. Fine Flowers in the Valley | XVI. Widdecombe Fair |
| VIII. The Battle of Otterbourne | XVII. Sir Eglamour (S. Rowlands) |
| IX. Sir Patrick Spens | |

II

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| William Langland | XVIII. From Piers Plowman |
| Geoffrey Chaucer | XIX. From the Prologue to the Canterbury
Tales |
| | XX. From The Knight's Tale |
| | XXI. The Nun's Priest's Tale |
| | XXII. The Wife of Bath has no regrets |
| Robert Henryson | XXIII. Robene and Makyne |
| Edmund Spenser | XXIV. From The Faerie Queene: Despair |
| | XXV. The Procession of Times and Seasons |
| Michael Drayton | XXVI. Agincourt |
| | XXVII. From Nymphidia |
| William Shakespeare | XXVIII. From Venus and Adonis |
| Sir John Suckling | XXIX. A Ballad Upon a Wedding |
| John Milton | XXX. Satan rallies his hosts in Hell |
| | XXXI. Adam and the Archangel
From Paradise Lost |
| John Dryden | XXXII. From Absalom and Achitophel
Shaftesbury |
| | XXXIII. From MacFlecknoe:
Shadwell |
| Alexander Pope | XXXIV. The Rape of the Lock |
| George Crabbe | XXXV. From Peter Grimes |
| | XXXVI. From Sir Eustace Grey |
| Robert Burns | XXXVII. Tam o' Shanter |
| James Hogg | XXXVIII. Kilmeny |

William Wordsworth

Sir Walter Scott

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

George Gordon, Lord

Byron

John Keats

Alfred Tennyson

Robert Browning

Matthew Arnold

William Morris

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Rudyard Kipling

G. K. Chesterton

John Masefield

XXXIX. Michael

XL. Margaret

XLI. From The Prelude: Childhood and
Schooltime

XLII. Flodden

XLIII. Proud Maisie

XLIV. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

XLV. From The Vision of Judgment

XLVI. The Eve of St. Agnes

XLVII. O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms

XLVIII. From Northern Farmer

XLIX. The Passing of Arthur

L. The Italian in England

LI. Porphyria's Lover

LII. From Sohrab and Rustum

LIII. Two Red Roses Across the Moon

LIV. The Blessed Damozel

LV. The Explorer

LVI. Ethandune: The Last Charge

LVII. From Dauber

LVIII. From Reynard the Fox

Part One
LYRICAL POETRY

*"What is Song's eternity?
Come and see"*

I

WORDS FOR MUSIC

*"He cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion,
either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanting
skill of music"*

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY
An Apology for Poetry

FOR pure delight, there are no lyrics to equal those of the Elizabethan and early seventeenth-century poets, but it was not altogether in a sudden burst of glory that England became "a nest of singing birds". By the thirteenth century lyric poetry was being written with great success by unknown poets, and "the best English songs", as E. K. Chambers has said, "were really English".

Chance, which played a big hand in these pre-printing days, has preserved a delightful selection of these early lyrics for us, sometimes even, as in the case of the famous "Cuccu Song" (about 1250), complete with their music. Though the English of the rhymes, lullabies and carols which follow may look rather unfamiliar at first, it soon becomes easy to see "how they go", and more than repays a little trouble. You will find in them a fine expression of that sense of the impermanence of human life and all earthly things which is deeper and older than Christianity:

*The earth goes to the earth glittering in gold,
The earth goes to the earth sooner than it wold,
The earth builds on the earth castles and towers,
The earth says to the earth—all this is ours.*

This is the burden of the Irish mother's sad but enchanting lullaby to her child (5) and of "*Winter awakens all my care*" (4), and its contrast with the simple joyousness of the carols is complete. Again, the Christian story is sung of with peculiar beauty and tenderness which comes partly of treating it, with all the naturalness in the world, as though it were a contemporary happening. The Mary who grieves at the poorness of the Manger (6) is a very human mother, the Child the child of the Miracle Plays to whom the Shepherds offer "a bob of cherys" and a ball. In the most considerable of these anonymous lyrics (14), the poem with the refrain *Quia Amore Languet*, the themes of earthly and heavenly love are beautifully blended; and you will have to go a long way to find anything to

Come dance with me

I AM of Irlaunde,
Ant of the holy londe
Of Irlande.
Gode sire, pray I thee,
For of saynte Charite,
Come ant daunce wyt me
In Irlaunde.

2

Spring is come

LENTEN ys come with love to tounne,
With blosmen ant with briddes rounne,
That al this blisse bryngeth;
Dayes-eyes in this dales,
Notes suete of nyhtegales,
Vch foul singeth;
The threstlecoc him threteth oo,
Away is huere winter wo,
When woderove springeth;
This foulès singeth ferly fele,
Ant wlyteth on huere winter wele,
That al the wode ryngeth . . .

to tounne] in turn; blosmen] blossom; vch foul] each bird;
him threteth oo] is always scolding them; woderove] woodruff; .
ferly fele] wondrous many; wlyteth] whistle.

A maiden in the moor lay

MAIDEN in the mor lay,
 In the mor lay,
 Sevcnygt fulle, sevcnygt fulle,
 Maiden in the mor lay,
 In the mor lay,
 Sevenygtes fulle ant a day.

Welle was hire mete;
 Wat was hire mete?
 The primerole ant the,—
 The primerole ant the,—
 Welle was hire mete;
 Wat was hire mete?
 The primerole ant the violet.

Welle was hire dryng;
 Wat was hire dryng?
 The chelde water of the,—
 The chelde water of the,—
 Welle was hire dryng;
 Wat was hire dryng?
 The chelde water of the welle-spring.

Welle was hire bour;
 Wat was hire bour?
 The rede rose ant the,—
 The rede rose ant the,—
 Welle was hire bour;
 Wat was hire bour?
 The rede rose ant the hie flour.

mor] moor; dryng] drink; chelde] cold.

Winter wakens all my care

WYNTER wakeneth al my care,
 Nou this leves waxeth bare;
 Ofte I sike ant mourne sarc
 When hit cometh in my thoht
 Of this worldes joie, hou hit goth al to noht.

Nou hit is, and nou hit nys,
 Al so hit ner nere, ywis;
 That moni mon seith, soth hit ys:
 Al goth bote Godes wille:
 Alle we shule deye, thah us like ylle.

Al that gren me graueth grene,
 Nou hit faleweth albydene:
 Jesu, help that hit be sene
 Ant shuld us from helle!
 For y not whider y shall, ne hou longe her duelle.

this leves] these leaves;

sike] sigh;

Nou hit is, and nou hit nys, al so hit ner nere, ywis] now it is, and now it is
 not, as though it had never been, indeed;

faleweth] fades;

albydene] altogether;

y not whider y shall, ne hou longe her duelle] I know not whither I shall
 go, nor how long I shall dwell here.

A Cradle Song

LOLLAI, lollai, litil child!
 Whi wepistou so sore?
 Nedis mostou wepe,
 Hit was iyarkid the yore
 Ever to lib in sorow,
 And sich and mourne evere,
 As thin eldren did er this,
 Whil hi alivés were.

Lollai, lollai, litil child,
 Child, lolai, lullow!
 Into uncuth world
 Incummen so ertow.

Child, if it betidith
 That shou ssalt thrive and the,
 Thench thou were ifostred
 Uþ thî 'modêr kîne;
 Ever hab mund in thi hert
 Of those thinges thre,
 Whan thou commist, whan thou art,
 And what ssal com of the.

Lollai, lollai, litil child,
 Child, lollai, lollai!
 With sorow thou com into this world,
 With sorow ssalt wend awai.

iyarkid] ordained; sich] sigh; ertow] art thou;
 the] prosper; hab mund] have mind, remember.

The Christ Mother in the Stable

"Jesu, swete sonè dere!
 On full poor bed thou liest here,
 And that me grieveth sore;
 For thy cradle is like a byre,
 Ox and ass alone are near:
 Weep I must therefore.

"Jesu, sweeting, be not wroth
 Though I have not clout nor cloth
 Thee for to enfold,
 Thee for to enfold nor wrap.
 I have no covering thee to lap;
 But lay thou thy feet to my pap,
 And guard thee from the cold."

To the Child Jesus

O MY deir hert, young Jesus sweit,
 Prepare thy creddil in my spreit,
 And I sall rock thee in my hert
 And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir,
 With sangis sweit unto thy gloir;
 The knees of my hert sall I bow,
 And sing that richt *Balulalow*!

to my pap] within my breast.

A Lullaby for Jesus

*Lullay, myn lyking, my dere sone, myn swetyng,
Lullay my dere herte, myn owyn dere derlyng.*

I saw a fayr maydyn syttyn and syngc
sche lullyd a lytyl chyld a swete lordyng
Lullay . . .

That eche lord is that made alle thinge
of allè lordis he is lord, of allè kyngès kyng
Lullay . . .

Ther was mekyl melody at that chylde's berthe
all tho wern in hevene blys thei madè mekyl merthe
Lullay . . .

Aungele bryht thei song that nyt and seydn to that chyld,
blyssid be thou and so be sche that is bothe mek and myld.
Lullay . . .

sche] she.
eche] eternal

Lully, lulley

LULLY, lulley; lully, lulley;
The fawcon hath born my mak away.

He bare hym up, he bare hym down;
He bare hym into an orchard brown.

mak] mate.

In that orchard ther was an hall,
That was hangid with purpill and pall.

And in that hall ther was a bede;
Hit was hangid with gold so rede.

And yn that bed ther lythe a knyght,
His wowndes bledying day and nyght.

By that bedes side ther kneleth a may,
And she wepeth both nyght and day.

And by that beddes side ther stondith a ston,
Corpus Christi wretyn thereon.

may] maiden.

IO

I SING of a maiden
That is makeles;
King of all kings
To her son she ches.

He came al so still
There his mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came al so still
To his mother's bour,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flour.

makeles] has no match; ches] chose

He came al so still
There his mother lay,
As dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she;
Well may such a lady
Goddës mother be.

II

Adam lay in bondage

ADAM lay ibowndyn,
bowndyn in a bond
fowr thowsand wynter
thowt he not to long;
and al was for an appil,
an appil that he tok,
as clerkes findyn
wretyn in here book.
ne hadde the appil take ben,
the appil taken ben,
ne hadde never our lady
a ben Hevene qwen.
blyssid be the tyme
that appil take was!
therefore we mown syngyn
Deo gracias.

here] their; mown] may well.

I HAVE twelfe oxen that be faire and brown,
 And they go a grasing down by the town.
 With hey! with how! with hoy!
 Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

I have twelfe oxen, and they be faire and white,
 And they go a grasing down by the dyke.
 With hey! with how! with hoy!
 Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

I have twelfe oxen, and they be faire and blak,
 And they go a grasing down by the lake.
 With hey! with how! with hoy!
 Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

I have twelfe oxen, and they be faire and rede,
 And they go a grasing down by the mede.
 With hey! with how! with hoy!
 Saweste not you mine oxen, you litill prety boy?

Come home again

My blood so red
 For thee was shed,
 Come home again, come home again;
 Mine own sweet heart, come home again!
 You are gone astray
 Out of your way,
 Therefore, sweet heart, come home again!

IN the vale of restles mynd
 I sowght in mownteyn and in mede,
 trustyng a treulove for to fynd:
 upon an hyll than toke I hede;
 a voice I herd (and nere I yede)
 in gret dolour complaynyng tho,
 "see, dere soule, my sydes blede
Quia amore langueo."

Upon thys mownt I fand a tree;
 undir thys tree a man sittynge;
 frome hede to fote wowndyd was he,
 hys hert blode I saw bledynge;
 A semely man to be a kyng,
 A graciouse face to loke unto.
 I askyd him how he had paynyng,
 (he said) "*Quia amore langueo.*"

I am treulove that fals was never;
 my sistur, mannys soule, I loved hyr thus;
 By-cause I wold on no wyse dissevere,
 I left my kyngdome gloriouse;
 I purveyd hyr a place full preciouise;
 she flytt, I folowyd, I luvd her soo;
 that I suffred thes paynes piteuouse
Quia amore langueo.

I sitt on an hille for to see farre,
 I loke to the vale, my spouse I see;
 now rynne she awayward, now cummyth she
 yet fro myn eye syght she may nat be;
 sum waite ther pray, to make hyr flee,
 I rynne tofore to chastise hyr foo;
 recover my soule agayne to me,
Quia amore langueo.

My swete spouse will we goo play ;
 apples ben rype in my gardine;
 I shall clothe thee in new array,
 thy mete shall be mylk, honye, and wyne;
 now, dere soule, latt us go dyne,
 thy sustenance is in my skryppe, loo!
 tary not now, fayre spouse myne,
Quia amore-langueo.

yf thou be fowle, I shall make thee clene,
 if thou be seke, I shall thee hele;
 yf thou owght more, I shall thee mene,
 spouse, why will thou nowght with me dele?
 thou fowndyst never love so lele;
 what wilt thou, sowle, that I shall do?
 I may of unkyndnes thee appele,
Quia amore langueo . . ."

Quia amore langueo] "for I am sick, of love"; yede] wen ;
 nere] nearer; flytt] fled;
 narre] nearer; mene] pity;
 appele] accuse.

15

By-low, my babe

By-low, my babe, lie still and sleep;
 It grieves me sore to see thee weep.
 If thou wert quiet, I'd be glad;
 Thy mourning makes my sorrow sad.
 By-lów, my boy, thy mother's joy,
 Thy father breeds me great annoy—
 By-low, lie low.

When he began to court my love,
And me with sugared words to move,
His feignings false and flattering cheer
To me that time did not appear.
But now I see most cruelly
He cares not for my babe nor me—
By-low, lie low.

Lie still, my darling, sleep awhile,
And when thou wak'st thou'lt sweetly smile;
But smile not as thy father did,
To cozen maids—nay, God forbid!
But yet I fear thou wilt grow near
Thy father's heart and face to bear—
By-low, lie low.

I cannot choose, but ever will
Be loving to thy father still;
Where'er he say, 'where'er he ride
My love with him doth still abide.
In weal or woe, where'er he go,
My heart shall not forsake him; so
By-low, lie low.

16

O WESTERN wind, when wilt thou blow
That the small rain down can rain?
Christ, that my love were in my arms,
And I in my bed again!

HEY nonny no!
 Men are fools that wish to die!
 Is't not fine to dance and sing
 When the bells of death do ring?
 Is't not fine to swim in wine,
 And turn upon the toe
 And sing hey nonny no,
 When the winds do blow,
 And the seas do flow?
 Hey nonny no!

My lady is a pretty one

My lady is a pretty on,
 A pretty, pretty, pretty on,
 My lady is a pretty on
 As ever I saw.

She is gentyll and also wyse;
 Of all other she berith the price
 That ever I saw.

To here hir syng, to se her dance!
 She wyll the best herselfe advance
 That ever I saw.

To se her fyngers that be so small!
 In my consail she passeth all
 That ever I saw.

berith the price] has most worth.

Nature in her hath wonderly wrought;
Christ never sych another bowght
That ever I saw.

I have sene many that have bewty,
Yet is ther non lyk to my lady
That ever I saw.

Therfor I dare this boldly say:
I shall have the best and farest may
That ever I saw.

may] maiden.

19

A Christmas Carol

c. 1500

WHEN Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem, in that fair city,
Angels sungen with mirth and glee,
“*In excelsis gloria!*”

Herdmen beheld these angels bright,
To them appeard with great light,
And said, “God’s Son is born this night,
“*In excelsis gloria!*”

This King is come to save (His) kind,
As in Scripturs we (may) find;
Therefore this song have we in mind,
“*In excelsis gloria!*”

Then, Lord, for Thy great grace,
(Grant us) the bliss to see Thy face,
Where we may sing to Thee solace,
 "In excelsis gloria!"

20

The lily, the rose

THE maidens came
When I was in my mother's bower,
I had all that I would.
 The bailey beareth the bell away;
 The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.
The silver is white, red is the gold;
The robes they lay in fold.
 The bailey beareth the bell away;
 The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.
And through the glass window shines the sun.
How should I love, and I so young?
 The bailey beareth the bell away;
 The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.

21

THE holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown:

*The rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a blossom,
As white as the lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our sweet Saviour:

The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good:

The holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas day in the morn:

The holly bears a bark,
As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all:

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown:

*The rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.*

I HAD a little nut tree,
 Nothing would it bear,
 But a silver nutmeg,
 And a golden pear.
 The King of Spain's daughter
 Came to visit me,
 And all was because of
 My little nut tree.
 I skipped over water
 I danced over sea,
 And all the birds in the air
 Could not catch me.

WILLIAM CORNISH

14?-1523

PREASURE it is
 To hear, iwis,
 The birdes sing.
 The deer in the dale,
 The sheep in the vale,
 The corn springing;
 God's purveyance
 For sustenance
 It is for man.
 Then we always
 To Him give praise,
 And thank Him than,
 And thank Him than.
 iwis] in truth.

SIR THOMAS WYATT

1503-1542

WHAT should I say?
 —Since Faith is dead,
 And Truth away
 From you is fled?
 Should I be led
 With doubleness?
 Nay! nay! mistress.

I promised you,
 And you promised me,
 To be as true
 . As I would be.
 But since I see
 Your double heart,
 Farewell, my part.

Thought for to take
 'Tis not my mind;
 But to forsake
 One so unkind;
 And as I find
 So will I trust.
 Farewell, unjust!

Can ye say nay
 But that you said
 That I alway
 Should be obeyed?
 And—thus betrayed,
 Or that I wist!
 Farewell, unkist!

AND wilt thou leave me thus?
 Say nay, say nay, for shame!
 —To save thee from the blame
 Of all my grief and grame.
 And wilt thou leave me thus?
 Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
 That hath loved thee so long
 In wealth and woe among:
 And is thy heart so strong
 As for to leave me thus?
 Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
 That hath given thee my heart
 Never for to depart
 Neither for pain nor smart:
 And wilt thou leave me thus?
 Say nay! say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
 And have no more pitye
 Of him that loveth thee?
 Alas, thy cruelty!
 And wilt thou leave me thus?
 Say nay! say nay!

My lute, awake! perform the last
 Labour that thou and I shall waste,
 And end that I have now begun;
 For when this song is said and past,
 My lute, be still, for I have done.

As to be heard where ear is none,
As lead to grave in marble stone,
My song may pierce her heart as soon :
Should we then sing, or sigh, or moan?
No, no, my lute ! for I have done.

The rocks do not so cruelly
Repulse the waves continually,
As she my suit and affection ;
So that I am past remedy :
Whereby my lute and I have done.

Proud of the spoil that thou hast got
Of simple hearts thorough Love's shot,
By whom, unkind, thou hast them won ;
Think not he hath his bow forgot,
Although my lute and I have done.

Vengeance shall fall on thy disdain,
That makest but game of earnest pain :
Trow not alone under the sun
Unquit to cause thy lover's plain,
Although my lute and I have done.

May chance thee lie wither'd and old
The winter nights that are so cold,
Plaining in vain unto the moon :
Thy wishes then dare not be told :
Care then who list ! for I have done.

And then may chance thee to repent
The time that thou hast lost and spent
To cause thy lover sigh and swoon :
Then shalt thou know beauty but lent,
And wish and want as I have done.

Now cease, my lute ! this is the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste,
And ended is that we begun :
Now is this song both sung and past—
My lute, be still, for I have done.

27

ANNE ASKEWE

1520-1546

*The Balade whych Anne Askewe Made And
Sang When She Was in Newgate*

LYKE as the armed knyght
Appoynted to the field
With thys world wyll I fyght,
And fayth shall be my shielde.

I now rejoyce in hart,
And hope byd me do so,
For Christ wyll take my part,
And ease me of my wo.

Thu sayst, Lord, whoso knocke
To them wylt thou attende;
Undo therfor the locke,
And thy strong power sende.

More ennyes now I have
Than heeres upon my heed;
Lete them not me deprave,
But fyght thu in my steed.

Yet, Lorde, I the desyre,
For that they do to me:
Lete them not taste the hyre
Of their inyquyte.

GEORGE GASCOIGNE

1525?-1577

SING lullaby, as women doe,
 Wherewith they bring their babes to rest,
 And lullaby can I sing to,
 As womanly as can the best.
 With lullaby they still the chulde,
 And if I be not much beguild,
 Full many wanton babes have I,
 Which must be stild with lullabic.

First lullaby my youthfull yeares,
 It is now time to go to bed,
 For crooked age and hoary heares,
 Have wone the haven with in my head:
 With Lullaby then youth be still,
 With Lullaby content thy will,
 Since courage quayles, and commes behind,
 Go sleepe, and so beguile thy minde.

Next Lullaby my gazing eyes,
 Which wonted were to glaunce apace.
 For every Glasse may nowe suffise,
 To shewe the furrowes in my face:
 With Lullaby then winke awhile,
 With Lullabye your lookes beguile:
 Lette no fayre face, nor beautie brighte,
 Entice you ofte with vayne delighthe.

And Lullaby my wanton will,
 Lette reasons rule, nowe reigne thy thought,
 Since all to late I finde my skyll,
 Howe deare I have thy fansies bought:

With Lullaby nowc tak thyne ease,
With Lullaby thy doubtcs appease,
For trust to this, if thou be styll,
My body shall obey thy will.

Thus Lullabye my youth, myne eyes,
My will, my ware, and all that was, [^]
I can no mo delayes devise,
But welcome payne, let pleasure passe:
With Lullaby now take your leave,
With Lullaby your dreames deceive,
And when you rise with waking eye,
Remember then this Lullabye.

efte] again.

29

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

1552?-1618

Now what is love? I pray thee, tell.
It is that fountain and that well,
Where pleasure and repentance dwell.
It is perhaps that sauncing bell,
That tolls all in to heaven and hell:
And this is love, as I hear tell.

Yet what is love? I pray thee say.
It is a yea, it is a nay,
A pretty kind of sporting fray;
It is a thing will soon away;
Then take the vantage while you may:
And this is love, as I hear say. .

sauncing] sacring, at mass.

Yet what is love? I pray thee show.
A thing that creeps, it cannot go;
A prize that passeth to and fro;
A thing for one, a thing for mo;
And he that proves must find it so:
And this is love, sweet friend, I trow.

30

ROBERT WEVER

c. 1550

In Youth is Pleasure

In a harbour grene aslepe whereas I lay,
The byrdes sang swete in the middes of the day,
I dreamed fast of mirth and play:

In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

Methought I walked still to and fro,
And from her company I could not go—
But when I waked it was not so:

In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

Therefore my hart is surely pyght
Of her alone to have a sight
Which is my joy and hartes delight:
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

ANONYMOUS

As ye came from the Holy Land

As ye came from the holy land
 Of Walsinghame,
 Met you not with my true love
 By the way as you came?

How should I know your true love,
 That have met many a one
 As I came from the holy land,
 That have come, that have gone?

She is neither white nor brown,
 But as the heavens fair;
 There is none hath her form divine
 In the earth or the air.

Such a one did I meet, good sir,
 Such an angelic face,
 Who like a nymph, like a queen, did appear
 In her gait, in her grace.

She hath left me here alone,
 All alone, as unknown,
 Who sometime did me lead with herself,
 And me loved as her own.

What's the cause that she leaves you alone,
 And a new way doth take,
 That sometime did love you as her own,
 And her joy did you make?

Ye have loved her all my youth,
But now am old, as you see:
Love likes not the falling fruit,
Nor the withered tree.

Know that Love is a careless child,
And forgets promise past:
He is blind, he is deaf when he list,
And in faith never fast.

His desire is a dureless content,
And a trustless joy;
He is won with a world of despair,
And is lost with a toy.

Of womenkind such indeed is the love,
Or the word love abused,
Under which many childish desires
And conceits are excused.

But true love is a durable fire,
In the mind ever burning,
Never sick, never dead, never cold,
From itself never turning.

32

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

1554-1586

Songs of Astrophel

NIGHT hath closed all in her cloak,
Twinkling stars love-thoughts provoke,
Danger hence good care doth keep,
Jealousy itself doth sleep:
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
"No, no, no, no, my dear, let be."

That you heard was but a mouse,
Dumb sleep holdeth all the house;
Yet asleep, methinks, they say,
Young folks, take time while you may;
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
"No, no, no, no, my dear, let be."

33

"WHO is it that this dark night
Underneath my window plaineth?"
It is one who from thy sight
Being, ah, exiled, disdaineth
Every other vulgar light.

"Why, alas! and are you he?
Be not yet those fancies changed?"
Dear, when you find change in me,
Though from me you be estranged,
Let my change to ruin be.

"Well, in absence this will die;
Leave to see and leave to wonder."
Absence sure will help, if I
Can learn how myself to sunder
From what in my heart doth lie.

"Peace, I think that some give ear;
Come no more lest I get anger."
Bliss, I will my bliss forbear,
Fearing, sweet, you to endanger;
But my soul shall harbour there.

Sleep, Baby Mine

SLEEP, Baby mine, Desire's nurse, Beauty, singeth;
 Thy cries, O baby, set mine head on aching.
 The babe cries, "'Way, thy love doth keep me waking."

Lully, lully, my babe, Hope cradle bringeth
 Unto my children alway good rest taking.
 The babe cries, "'Way, thy love doth keep me waking."

Since, Baby mine, from me thy watching springeth,
 Sleep then a little; pap, Content is making.
 The babe cries, "Nay, for that abide I waking."

The Lover's Litany

RING out your bells! let mourning shewes be spread,
 For Love is dead.
 All love is dead, infected
 With the plague of deep disdain;
 Worth as nought worth rejected,
 And faith, fair scorn doth gain.
 From so ungrateful fancy,
 From such a female frenzy,
 From them that use men thus,
 Good Lord, deliver us!

Weep, neighbours, weep! Do you not hear it said
That Love is dead?
His deathbed, peacock's Folly;
His winding-sheet is Shame;
His will, False Seeming wholly;
His sole executor, Blame.
From so ungrateful fancy,
From such a female frenzy,
From them that use men thus,
Good Lord, deliver us!

Let dirge be sung, and trentals rightly read,
For Love is dead.
Sir Wrong his tomb ordaineth
My mistress' marble heart;
Which epitaph containeth
"Her eyes were once his dart."
From so ungrateful fancy,
From such a female frenzy,
From them that use men thus,
Good Lord, deliver us!

Alas, I lie. Rage hath this error bred,
Love is not dead.
Love is not dead, but sleepeth
In her unmatched mind;
Where she his counsel keepeth
Till due deserts she find.
Therefore from so vile fancy,
To call such wit a frenzy,
Who love can temper thus,
Good Lord, deliver us!

CHARLES TILNEY

152-1586

The Cobbler's Song

- Trumpart.* WE cobblers lead a merry life,
All. Dan, dan, dan, dan;
Strumbo. Void of all envy and of strife,
All. Dan diddle dan.
Dorothy. Our ease is great, our labour small,
All. Dan, dan, dan, dan;
Strumbo. And yet our gains be much withal,
All. Dan diddle dan.
Dorothy. With this art so fine and fair,
All. Dan, dan, dan, dan,
Trumpart. No occupation may compare,
All. Dan diddle dan.
Strumbo. For merry pastime and joyful glee
 Dan, dan, dan, dan,
Dorothy. Most happy men we cobblers be,
 Dan, diddle dan.
Trumpart. The can stands full of nappy ale,
 Dan, dan, dan, dan;
Strumbo. In our shop still withouten fail,
 Dan diddle dan.
Dorothy. This is our meat, this is our food,
 Dan, dan, dan, dan;
Trumpart. This brings us to a merry mood,
 Dan diddle dan.
Strumbo. This makes us work for company,
 Dan, dan, dan, dan,
Dorothy. To pull the tankards cheerfully,
 Dan diddle dan.
Trumpart. Drink to thy husband, Dorothy,
 Dan, dan, dan, dan;

Dorothy. Why, then, my Strumbo, there's to thee,
 Dan, diddle dan.
Strumbo. Drink thou the rest, Trumpart, amain,
 Dan, dan, dan, dan;
Dorothy. When that is gone, we'll fill 't again,
 Dan diddle dan.

37

JOHN STILL

1543(?)–1608

BACK and side go bare! go bare!
 Both foot and hand go cold!
 But belly, God send thee good ale enough;
 Whether it be new or old!

I cannot eat but little meat; my stomach is not good;
 But, sure, I think that I can drink with him that wears a hood!
 Though I go bare; take ye no care, I am nothing acold!
 I stuff my skin so full within of jolly good ale and old.

Back and side go bare! go bare! etc.

I love no roast but a nut-brown toast, and a crab laid in the fire!
 A little bread shall do me stead! much bread I not desire!
 No frost, no snow, no wind, I trow, can hurt me if I would;
 I am so wrapped, and thoroughly lapped of jolly good ale and old!

Back and side go bare! go bare! etc.

ANTHONY MUNDAY

1553?-1633

BEAUTY sat bathing by a spring
 Where fairest shades did hide her;
 The winds blew calm, the birds did sing,
 The cool streams ran beside her.
 My wanton thoughts enticed mine eye
 To see what was forbidden:
 But better memory said, fie!
 So vain desire was chidden.

Into a slumber then I fell,
 When fond imagination
 Seemed to see, but could not tell
 Her feature or her fashion.
 But even as babes in dreams do smile,
 And sometime fall a-weeping,
 So I awaked, as wise this while,
 As when I fell asleeping.

LANCELOT ANDREWES

1555-1626

COME, be my valentine!
 I'll gather eglantine,
 Cowslips and sops-in-wine,
 With fragrant roses;

Down by thy Phillis sit,
She will white lilies get
And daffodillies fit
To make thee posies.

I bear in sign of love
A sparrow in my glove,
And in my breast a dove—
This shall all be thine.
Besides of sheep a flock,
Which yieldeth many a lock,
And this shall be thy stock,—
Come, be my valentine.

40

JOHN LYLY

1553-1606

WHAT bird so sings, yet so does wail?
O 'tis the ravish'd nightingale.
Jug, jug, jug, jug, tereu! she cries,
And still her woes at midnight rise.
Brave pricksong! Who is't now we hear?
None but the lark so shrill and clear;
Now at heaven's gate she claps her wings,
The morn not waking till she sings.
Hark, hark, with what a pretty throat
Poor robin redbreast tunes his note!
Hark how the jolly cuckoos sing
Cuckoo! to welcome in the spring!
Cuckoo! to welcome in the spring!

CUPID and my Campaspe play'd
 At cards for kisses—Cupid paid:
 He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows,
 His mother's doves, and team of sparrows;
 Loses them too; then down he throws
 The coral of his lip, the rose
 Growing on's cheek (but none knows how);
 With these, the crystal of his brow,
 And then the dimple of his chin:
 All these did my Campaspe win.
 At last he set her both his eyes—
 She won, and Cupid blind doth rise.
 O Love! has she done this for thee?
 What shall, alas, become of me?

THOMAS LODGE

1557-1625

LOVE in my bosom like a bee
 Doth suck his sweet:
 Now with his wings he plays with me,
 Now with his feet.
 Within mine eyes he makes his nest,
 His bed amidst my tender breast:
 My kisses are his daily feast,
 And yet he robs me of my rest:
 Ah! wanton, will ye?

And if I sleep, then percheth he
 With pretty flight,
 And makes his pillow of my knee
 The livelong night.

Strike I my lute, he tunes the string;
He music plays if so I sing;
He lends me every lovely thing,
Yet cruel he my heart doth sting:
Whist, wanton, still ye!

Else I with roses every day
Will whip you hence,
And bind you, when you long to play,
For your offence.
I'll shut mine eyes to keep you in;
I'll make you fast it for your sin;
I'll count your power not worth a pin.
—Alas, what hereby shall I win
If he gainsay me?

What if I beat the wanton boy
With many a rod?
He will repay me with annoy,
Because a god.
Then sit thou safely on my knee;
Then let thy bower my bosom be;
Lurk in mine eyes, I like of thee;
O Cupid, so thou pity me,
Spare not, but play thee!

43

FOR pity, pretty eyes, surcease
To give me war, and grant me peace!
Triumphant eyes, why bear you arms
Against a heart that thinks no harms,
A heart already quite appalled,
A heart that yields, and is enthralled?

Kill rebels, proudly that resist,
Not those that in true faith persist,
And conquered serve your deity.
Will you, alas! command me die?
Then die I yours, and death my cross,
But unto you pertains the loss.

44

GEORGE PEELE

1558?-1597

A Voice from the Well

FAIR maiden, white and red,
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head,
And thou shalt have some cockle-bread.
Gently dip, but not too deep,
For fear thou make the golden beard to weep.
Fair maid, white and red,
Comb me smooth, and stroke my head;
And every hair a sheave shall be,
And every sheave a golden tree.

45

Bethsabe's Song

HOT sun, cool fire, tempered with sweet air,
Black shade, fair nurse, shadow my white hair:
Shine, sun; burn, fire; breathe, air, and ease me;
Black shade, fair nurse, shroud me and please me:
Shadow, my sweet nurse, keep me from burning,
Make not my glad cause cause of mourning.

Let not my beauty's fire
Inflame unstaïd desire,
Nor pierce any bright eye
That wandereth lightly.

46

Song of Oenone and Paris

- Oenone.* FAIR and fair, and twice so fair,
As fair as any may be;
The fairest shepherd on our green,
A Love for any lady.
- Paris.* Fair and fair, and twice so fair,
As fair as any may be;
Thy love is fair for thee alone,
And for no other lady.
- Oenone.* My Love is fair, my Love is gay,
As fresh as bin the flowers in May;
And of my Love my roundelay,
My merry, merry, merry roundelay,
Concludes with Cupid's curse:
"They that do change old love for new,
Pray gods they change for worse."
- Together.* They that do change old love for new,
Pray gods they change for worse. . .

47

A Farewell to Arms

(To Queen Elizabeth)

His golden locks Time hath to silver turn'd;
O Time too swift, O swiftness never ceasing!

His youth 'gainst time and age hath ever spurn'd,
But spurn'd in vain; youth waneth by increasing:
Beauty, strength, youth, are flowers but fading'seen;
Duty, faith, love, are roots, and ever green.

His helmet now shall make a hive for bees;
And, lovers' sonnets turn'd to holy psalms,
A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,
And feed on prayers, which are Age his alms:
But though from court to cottage he depart,
His Saint is sure of his unspotted heart.

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,
He'll teach his swains this carol for a song,—
"Blest be the hearts that wish my sovereign well,
Curst be the souls that think her any wrong."
Goddess, allow this aged man his right
To be your beadsman now that was your knight.

48

ROBERT GREENE

1558-1592

From The Shepherd's Wife's Song

AH, what is love? It is a pretty thing,
As sweet unto a shepherd as a king,
And sweeter too;
For kings have cares that wait upon a crown,
And cares can make the sweetest love to frown.
Ah then, ah then,
If country loves such sweet desires gain,
What lady would not love a shepherd swain?

His flocks are folded, he comes home at night,
As merry as a king in his delight,

And merrier too;

For kings bethink them what the state require,
Where shepherds careless carol by the fire.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires gain,
What lady would not love a shepherd swain?

He kisseth first, then sits as blithe to eat
His cream and curds, as doth the king his meat,

And blither too;

For kings have often fears when they do sup,
Where shepherds dread no poison in their cup.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires gain,
What lady would not love a shepherd swain?

Thus with his wife he spends the year as blithe,
As doth the king at every tide or sithe,

And blither too;

For kings have war and broils to take in hand,
Where shepherds laugh, and love upon the land.

Ah then, ah then,

If country loves such sweet desires gain,
What lady would not love a shepherd swain?

49

SAMUEL DANIEL

1562-1619

Love is a sickness full of woes,

All remedies refusing;

A plant that with most cutting grows,

Most barren with best using.

Why so?
More we enjoy it, more it dies;
If not enjoy'd, it sighing cries—
Heigh ho!

Love is a torment of the mind,
A tempest everlasting;
And Jove hath made it of a kind
Not well, nor full, nor fasting.

Why so?
More we enjoy it, more it dies;
If not enjoy'd, it sighing cries—
Heigh ho!

50

ARE they shadows that we see?
And can shadows pleasure give?
Pleasures only shadows be,
Cast by bodies we conceive;
And are made the things we deem
In those figures which we seem.

But those pleasures vanish fast,
Which by shadows are exprest;
Pleasures are not, if they last;
In their passing is their best:
Glory is more bright and gay
In a flash, and so away.

Feed apace then, greedy eyes,
On the wonder you behold:
Take it sudden, as it flies,
Though you take it not to hold,
When your eyes have done their part
Thought must length'n it in the heart.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

1564-1593

The Passionate Shepherd to his Love

COME live with me and be my love,
 And we will all the pleasures prove
 That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
 And all the craggy mountains yields.

There we will sit upon the rocks,
 And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
 By shallow rivers to whose falls
 Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
 With a thousand fragrant posies;
 A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
 Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle:

A gown made of the finest wool,
 Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
 Fair lined slippers for the cold,
 With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
 With coral clasps and amber studs:
 And if these pleasures may thee move,
 Come live with me and be my love.

HENRY CONSTABLE

1562-1613

DIAPHENIA, like the daffadowndilly,
 White as the sun, fair as the lily,
 Heigh ho, how I do love thee!
 I do love thee as my lambs
 Are belovèd of their dams—
 How blest were I if thou wouldst prove

Diaphenia, like the spreading roses,
 That in thy sweets all sweets encloses,
 Fair sweet, how I do love thee!
 I do love thee as each flower
 Loves the sun's life-giving power,
 For, dead, thy breath to life might move

Diaphenia, like to all things blessed,
 When all thy praises are expressed,
 Dear joy, how I do love thee!
 As the birds do love the Spring,
 Or the bees their careful king.
 Then, in requite, sweet virgin, love me!

ANONYMOUS

God be in my head,
 And in my understanding;
 God be in mine eyes,
 And in my looking;
 God be in my mouth,

And in my speaking;
God be in my heart,
And in my thinking;
God be at my end and at my departing.

54

HIERUSALEM, my happy home,
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end,
Thy joys when shall I see?

O happy harbour of the Saints!
O sweet and pleasant soil!
In thee no sorrow may be found,
No grief, no care, no toil!

There lust and lucre cannot dwell.
There envy bears no sway;
There is no hunger, heat, nor cold,
But pleasure every way.

Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamonds square;
Thy gates are of right orient pearl,
Exceeding rich and rare.

Thy turrets and thy pinnacles
With carbuncles do shine;
Thy very streets are paved with gold,
Surpassing clear and fine.

Ah, my sweet home, Hierusalem,
Would God I were in thee!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joys that I might see.

Thy gardens and thy gallant walks
Continually are green;
There grows such sweet and pleasant flowers
As nowhere else are seen.

Quite through the street, with silver sound,
The flood of Life doth flow;
Upon whose banks on every side
The wood of Life doth grow.

There trees for evermore bear fruit,
And evermore do spring;
And evermore the angels sit,
And evermore do sing.

Our Lady sings *Magnificat*
With tones surpassing sweet;
And all the virgins bear their part,
Sitting about her feet.

Hierusalem, my happy home,
Would God I were in thee!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joys that I might see!

55

From *A New Courtly Sonnet of the Lady
Greensleeves*

*Greensleeves was all my joy,
Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
And who but Lady Greensleeves?*

Alas, my Love, ye do me wrong
To cast me off discourteously;
And I have lovèd you so long,
Delighting in your company.
Greensleeves was all my joy, etc.

I bought thee kerchers to thy head,
That were wrought fine and gallantly,
I kept thee both at bed and board,
Which cost my purse well-favouredly.

Thy gown was of the grassy green,
Thy sleeves of satin hanging by,
Which made thee to be our harvest queen,
And yet thou wouldst not love me.

My gayest gelding I thee gave,
To ride wherever liked thee,
No lady ever was so brave,
And yet thou wouldst not love me.

My men were clothèd all in green,
And they did ever wait on thee;
All this was gallant to be seen,
And yet thou wouldst not love me.

They set thee up, they took thee down,
They served thee with humility;
They foot might not once touch the ground,
And yet thou wouldst not love me.

And who did pay for all this gear
That thou didst spend when pleased thee?
Even I that am rejected here,
And thou disdain'st to love me.

Greensleeves, now farewell! adieu!
God I pray to prosper thee;
For I am still thy lover true.
Come once again and love me.

*Greensleeves was all my joy,
Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was all my joy,
And who but Lady Greensleeves?*

56

Madrigal

MY Love in her attire doth show her wit,
It doth so well become her;
For every season she hath dressings fit,
For Winter, Spring and Summer.
No beauty she doth miss
When all her robes are on:
But Beauty's self she is
When all her robes are gone.

57

A Pedlar

FINE knacks for ladies! cheap, choice, brave and new,
Good pennyworths,—but money cannot move:
I keep a fair but for the Fair to view—
A beggar may be liberal of love.
Though all my wares be trash, the heart is true,
The heart is true.

Great gifts are guiles and look for gifts again;
My trifles come as treasures from my mind:
It is a precious jewel to be plain;
Sometimes in shell the orient'st pearls we find:—
Of others take a sheaf, of me a grain!
Of me a grain!

58

Tears

WEEP you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste!
But my Sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at even he sets?
Rest you then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping.

59

THERE is a Lady sweet and kind,
Was never face so pleased my mind;
I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her till I die.

Her gesture, motion, and her smiles,
Her wit, her voice, my heart beguiles,
Beguiles my heart I know not why,
And yet I love her till I die.

Cupid is wingèd and doth range,
Her country so my love doth change:
But change she earth, or change she sky,
Yet will I love her till I die.

60

SEE, see, mine own sweet jewel,
What I have for my darling:
A robin redbreast and a starling.
These I give both in hope to move thee;
Yet thou say'st I do not love thee.

61

A Wooing Song

I HAVE house and land in Kent,
And if you'll love me, love me now;
Two-pence halfpenny is my rent,
I cannot come every day to woo.

I am my father's eldest son,
My mother eke doth love me well,
For I can bravely clout my shoon,
And I full well can ring a bell.

My father he gave me a hog,
My mother she gave me a sow;
I have a God-father dwells thereby,
And he on me bestowed a plough.

One time I gave thee a paper of pins,
Another time a tawdry-lace;
And if thou wilt not grant me love,
In truth I die before thy face.

I have been twice our Whitson-lord,
I have had ladies many fair,
And eke thou hast my heart in hold
And in my mind seem passing rare.

I will put on my best white slops
And I will wear my yellow hose,
And on my head a good grey hat,
And in't I stick a lovely rose.

Wherefore cease off, make no delay,
And if you'll love me, love me now,
Or else I seek some otherwise,
For I cannot come every day to woo.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564-1616

Songs from the Plays

62

WHO is Silvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admired be.

79

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness.
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness;
And, being helped, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling;
To her let us garlands bring.

63

WHEN icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail;
When blood is nipped, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit-tu-who! a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marion's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-whit, tu-who! a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Two Fairy Songs

OVER hill, over dale,
 Thorough bush, thorough brier,
 Over park, over pale,
 Thorough flood, thorough fire:
 I do wander everywhere,
 Swifter than the moon's sphere;
 And I serve the fairy queen,
 To dew her orbs upon the green.
 The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
 In their gold coats spots you see;
 Those be rubies, fairy favours,
 In those freckles live their savours

* * * * *

You spotted snakes, with double tongue,
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong;
 Come not near our fairy queen.

Philomel, with melody,
 Sing in our sweet lullaby;
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
 Never harm,
 Nor spell nor charm,
 Come our lovely lady nigh.
 So, good night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here;
 Hence, you long-legged spiders, hence!
 Beetles black, approach not near:
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Philomel, with melody,
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby!
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh.
So, good night, with lullaby.

65

TELL me, where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?
Reply, reply.

It is engendered in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies.
Let us all ring fancy's knell.
I'll begin it. Ding, dong, bell.
Ding, dong, bell.

66

SIGH no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sighs of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no mo
 Of dumps so dull and heavy;
 The fraud of men was ever so,
 Since summer first was leavy.
 Then sigh not so,
 But let them go,
 And be you blithe and bonny,
 Converting all your sighs of woe
 Into Hey nonny, nonny.

67

Two Songs of Amiens

UNDER the greenwood tree
 Who loves to lie with me,
 And turn his merry note
 Unto the sweet bird's throat,
 Come hither, come hither, come hither:
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
 But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun
 And loves to live i' the sun,
 Seeking the food he eats
 And pleased with what he gets,
 Come hither, come hither, come hither:
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
 But winter and rough weather.

* * * * *

BLOW, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho! the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not.
Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho! the holly!
This life is most jolly.

68

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino!
That o'er the green corn-field did pass,
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino!
Those pretty country folks would lie,
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet-lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino!
How that a life was but a flower
In spring-time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And therefore take the present time,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino!
For love is crownèd with the prime
In spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

69

Feste's Songs

O MISTRESS mine, where are you roaming?
O stay and hear; your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid.
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O! prepare it.
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O! where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.

TAKE, O! take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn,
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn;
But my kisses bring again,
 bring again,
Seals of love, but sealed in vain,
 sealed in vain.

HARK, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phoebus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies;
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes;
With everything that pretty is,
My lady sweet, arise!
Arise, arise!

FEAR no more the heat o' the sun
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak.
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone:
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan.
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

73

Ariel's three songs

COME unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands:
Curtstied when you have, and kissed
The wild waves whist,
Foot it feathly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.
Hark, hark!
Bow, wow
The watch-dogs bark:
Bow, wow,
Hark, hark! I hear
The strain of strutting Chanticleer
Cry, Cock-a-diddle-dow.

* * * * *

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls, that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade

But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.
Ding-dong!

Hark, now I hear them
Ding dong, bell!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Where the bee sucks, there suck I,
In a cowslip's bell I lie,
There I couch when owls do cry,
On the bat's back do I fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

74*

ROSES, their sharp spines being gone,
Not royal in their smells alone,
But in their hue;
Maiden pinks, of odour faint,
Daisies smell-less, yet most quaint,
And sweet thyme true;
Primrose, first-born child of Ver,
Merry springtime's harbinger,
With her bells dim:
Oxlips in the cradle growing,
Marigolds on death beds blowing,
Lark's heels trim:

All dear Nature's children sweet,
Lie 'fore bride and bridegroom's feet,
Blessing their sense. . . .

* This last song may be Fletcher's, and not Shakespeare's. It is a nosegay from *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

THOMAS CAMPION

1567-1619

THERE is a garden in her face
 Where roses and white lilies grow;
 A heavenly paradise is that place,
 Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow:
 There cherries grow which none may buy
 Till "Cherry-ripe" themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose
 Of orient pearl a double row,
 Which when her lovely laughter shows,
 They look like rosebuds filled with snow;
 Yet them nor peer nor prince can buy
 Till "Cherry-ripe" themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still;
 Her brows like bended bows do stand,
 Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill
 All that attempt with eye or hand
 Those sacred cherries to come nigh,
 Till "Cherry-ripe" themselves do cry.

FOLLOW thy fair sun, unhappy shadow!
 Though thou be black as night,
 And she made all of light,
 Yet follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow!

Follow her, while yet her glory shineth!
 There comes a luckless night
 That will dim all her light;
 And this the black unhappy shade divineth.

Follow still, since so thy fates ordained!
The sun must have his shade,
Till both at once do fade,—
The sun still proved, the shadow still *disdained*.

77

FOLLOW your saint, follow with accents sweet!
Haste you, sad notes, fall at her flying feet!
There, wrapt in cloud of sorrow, pity move,
And tell the ravisher of my soul I perish for her love:
But if she scorn my never-ceasing pain,
Then burst with sighing in her sight, and ne'er return again.

All that I sang still to her praise did tend;
Still she was first, still she my songs did end;
Yet she my love and music both doth fly,
The music that her echo is and beauty's sympathy;
Then let my notes pursue her scornful flight!
It shall suffice that they were breathed and died for her delight.

78

KIND are her answers,
But her performance keeps no day;
Breaks time, as dancers
From their own music when they stray.
All her free favours
And smooth words wing my hopes in vain.
O did ever voice so sweet but only feign?
Can true love yield such delay,
Converting joy to pain.

Lost is our freedom,
When we submit to women so:
Why do we need them
When in their best they work our woe?
There is no wisdom
Can alter ends, by Fate prefixt.
O why is the good of man with evil mixt?
Never were days yet called two,
But one night went betwixt.

79

WHEN thou must home to shades of underground,
And there arrived, a new admired guest,
The beauteous spirits do engirt thee round,
White Iope, blithe Helen, and the rest,
To hear the stories of thy finish'd love
From that smooth tongue whose music hell can move;

Then wilt thou speak of banqueting delights,
Of masques and revels which sweet youth doth make,
Of tourneys and great challenges of knights,
And all these triumphs for thy beauty's sake:
When thou has told these honours done to thee,
Then tell, O tell, how thou didst murder me!

SIR HENRY WOTTON

1568-1639

Elizabeth of Bohemia

You meaner beauties of the night,
 That poorly satisfy our eyes
 More by your number than your light,
 You common people of the skies,
 What are you when the moon shall rise?

You curious chanters of the wood,
 That warble forth Dame Nature's lays,
 Thinking your passions understood
 By your weak accents; what's your praise
 When Philomel her voice shall raise?

You violets that first appear,
 By your pure purple mantles known
 Like the proud virgins of the year,
 As if the spring were all your own;
 What are you when the rose is blown?

So, when my mistress shall be seen
 In form and beauty of her mind,
 By virtue first, then choice, a Queen,
 Tell me, if she were not design'd
 Th' eclipse and glory of her kind?

THOMAS DEKKER

1570?-1641

ART thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?

O sweet content!

Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexèd?

O punishment!

Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexèd

To add to golden numbers golden numbers?

O sweet content! O sweet, O sweet content!

Work apace, apace, apace, apace;

Honest labour bears a lovely face;

Then hey nonny nonny—hey nonny nonny!

Canst drink the waters of the crisped spring?

O sweet content!

Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?

O punishment!

Then he that patiently want's burden bears,

No burden bears, but is a king, a king!

O sweet content! O sweet, O sweet content!

Work apace, apace, apace, apace;

Honest labour bears a lovely face;

Then hey nonny nonny—hey nonny nonny!

BEN JONSON ✓

1573-1637

Dirge for Narcissus

SLOW, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears;

Yet slower, yet; O faintly, gentle springs;

List to the heavy part the music bears,

Woe weeps out her division when she sings.

Droop, herbs and flowers;
Fall, grief, in showers,
Our beauties are not ours;
O, I could still,
Like melting snow upon some craggy hill,
Drop, drop, drop, drop,
Since nature's pride is now a withered daffodil.

83

Hymn to Diana

QUEEN and Huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close;
Bless us then with wished sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddess excellently bright!

The Triumph

SEE the Chariot at hand here of Love,
 Wherein my Lady rideth!
 Each that draws is a swan or a dove,
 And well the car Love guideth.
 As she goes, all hearts do duty
 Unto her beauty
 And enamour'd do wish, so they might
 But enjoy such a sight,
 That they still were to run by her side,
 Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light
 All that Love's world compriseth!
 Do but look on her hair, it is bright
 As Love's star when it riseth!
 Do but mark, her forehead's smother
 Than words that soothe her;
 And from her arch'd brows such a grace
 Sheds itself through the face,
 As alone there triumphs to the life
 All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow
 Before rude hands have touch'd it?
 Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow
 Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
 Have you felt the wool of beaver,
 Or swan's down ever?
 Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier,
 Or the nard in the fire?
 Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
 O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

Love and Death

THOUGH I am young and cannot tell
 Either what Death or Love is well,
 Yet I have heard they both bear darts,
 And both do aim at human hearts:
 And then again, I have been told,
 Love wounds with heat, as Death with cold;
 So that I fear they do but bring
 Extremes to touch, and mean one thing.
 As in a ruin we it call
 One thing to be blown up, or fall;
 Or to our end like way may have
 By a flash of lightning, or a wave;
 So Love's inflamèd shaft or brand,
 May kill as soon as Death's cold hand;
 Except Love's fires the virtue have
 To fright the frost out of the grave.

JOHN FLETCHER

1579-1625

SING his praises that doth keep
 Our flocks from harm,
 Pan, the father of our sheep;
 And arm in arm
 Tread we softly in a round,
 Whilst the hollow neighbouring ground
 Fills the music with her sound,

Pan, O great god Pan, to thee
Thus do we sing!
Thou that keep'st us chaste and free
As the young spring;
Ever be thy honour spoke,
From that place the morn is broke,
To that place day doth unyoke!

87

The Passionate Man's Song

HENCE, all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights,
Wherein you spend your folly,
There's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see't.
But only melancholy,
O sweetest melancholy!
Welcome, folded arms, and fixèd eyes,
A sigh that piercing mortifies,
A look that's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound.

Fountain heads, and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves:
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly hous'd, save bats and owls;
A midnight bell, a parting groan,
These are the sounds we feed upon;
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley;
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

JOHN WEBSTER

1580?-1625?

ALL the Flowers of the Spring
 Meet to perfume our burying:
 These have but their growing prime,
 And man does flourish but his time.
 Survey our progress from our birth,
 We are set, we grow, we turn to earth.
 Courts adieu, and all delights,
 All bewitching appetites;
 Sweetest breath, and clearest eye,
 Like perfumes goe out and dye;
 And consequently this is done,
 As shadows wait upon the Sun.
 Vaine the ambition of Kings,
 Who seeke by trophies and dead things,
 To leave a living name behind,
 And weave but nets to catch the wind.

RICHARD, BISHOP CORBET

1582-1635

*A Proper New Ballad, intituled
 The Fairies Farewell*

(*To be sung or whistled to the tune of "The Meddow Brow", by the learned ;
 by the unlearned, to the tune of "Fortune"*)

FAREWELL rewards and Fairies,
 Good housewives now may say,
 For now foul sluts in Dairies
 Do fare as well as they.

And though they sweep their hearths no less
Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late for cleanliness,
Finds Sixpence in her shoe?

Lament, lament, old Abbeys,
The Fairies' lost command;
They did but change Priests' babies,
But some have chang'd your land:
And all your children stol'n from thence
Are now grown puritans;
Who live as changelings ever since
For love of your demains.

At morning and at evening both
You merry were and glad,
So little care of sleep and sloth
These pretty Ladies had;
When Tom came home from Labour,
Or Ciss to milking rose,
Then merrily, merrily went their Tabor,
And nimbly went their Toes.

Witness those rings and roundelayes
Of theirs, which yet remain,
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy plain;
But since of late, Elizabeth
And later James came in,
They never danced on any heath
As when the time hath been.

By which we note the Fairies
Were of the old profession;
Their songs were Ave Maries,
Their dances were procession:

But now, alas! they all are dead
Or gone beyond the Seas,
Or further for Religion fled
Or else they take their ease.

A tell-tale in their company
They never could endure,
And whoso kept not secretly
Their mirth were punished sure;
It was a just and Christian deed
To pinch such black and blue:
O how the Commonwealth doth need
Such Justices as you! . . .

90

FRANCIS BEAUMONT

1584-1616

Aspatia's Song

LAY a Garland on my Hearse of the dismal yew;
Maidens, Willow branches bear; say I died true;
My Love was false, but I was firm from my hour of birth;
Upon my buried body lay lightly gentle earth.

91

WILLIAM DRUMMOND

• 1586-1649

LIKE the Idalian Queen
Her hair about her eyne,
With neck and breasts ripe apples to be seen,
At first glance of the morn

In Cyprus gardens gathering those fair flow'rs
 Which of her blood were born,
 I saw, but fainting saw, my paramours.
 The Graces naked danced about the place,
 The winds and trees amaz'd
 With silence on her gaz'd,
 The flow'rs did smile, like those upon her face,
 And as their aspen stalks those fingers band
 (That she might read my case)
 A hyacinth I wish'd me in her hand.

92

THOMAS CAREW

1595?-1639?

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
 When June is past, the fading rose;
 For in your beauties, orient deep,
 These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more whither do stray
 The golden atoms of the day;
 For in pure love heaven did prepare
 Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more whither doth haste
 The nightingale, when May is past;
 For in your sweet dividing throat
 She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more where those stars light,
 That downwards fall in dead of night;
 For in your eyes they sit, and there
 Fixed become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more if east or west
The phoenix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.

93

Would you know what's soft? I dare
Not bring you to the down, or air,
Nor to stars to show what's bright,
Nor to snow to teach you white.
Nor, if you would music hear,
Call the orbs to tame your ear;
Nor, to please your sense, bring forth
Bruised nard, or what's more worth.
Or, on food were your thoughts placed
Bring you nectar for a taste—
Would you have all these in one,
Name my mistress, and 'tis done.

94

ANONYMOUS

Madrigal

O softly singing lute,
See with my tears thou time do keep.
Yet softly, gentle strings,
Agree with Love that cannot sleep.
Sorrow hist whenas it sings.
When tears do fall then sighs arise.
So grief oft shines in most sad eyes
Yea love through heart it dies, it dies.

My Dancing Day

(For a Flower Dance)

WHERE'S my lovely parsley, say?
 My violets, roses, where are they?
 My parsley, roses, violets fair,
 Where are my flowers? Tell me where?

And to the Maypole hie

COME lasses and lads, get leave of your dads,
 And away to the Maypole hie,
 For ev'ry he has got a she,
 And the fiddler's standing by:
 For Willie shall dance with Jane,
 And Johnny has got his Joan,
 To trip it, trip it, trip it, trip it up and down,
 To trip it, trip it, trip it, trip it up and down.

"You're out," says Dick. "Not I," says Nick,
 "'Twas the fiddler played it wrong,"
 "'Tis true," says Hugh, and so says Sue,
 And so says every one.

The fiddler then began
 To play the tune again,
 And every girl did trip it, trip it, trip it up and down.
 And every girl did trip it, trip it, trip it up and down.

And there they sate until it was late,
 And tired the fiddler quite,
 With singing and playing without any paying,
 From morning until night.

They told the fiddler then,
They'd pay him for his play,
And each gave twopence, twopence, twopence and
went away,
And each gave twopence, twopence, twopence, twopence and
went away.

"Good night," says Harry, "Good night," says Mary,
"Good night," says Poll to John,
"Good night," says Sue, "Good night," says Hugh,
"Good night," says every one.
Some walked and some did run,
Some loitered on the way,
And bound themselves by kisses twelve, to meet next holiday,
And bound themselves by kisses twelve, to meet next holiday.

96

THOMAS HEYWOOD

1573?-1641

PACK, clouds, away, and welcome day,
With night we banish sorrow;
Sweet air, blow soft, mount, lark, aloft
To give my Love good-morrow!
Wings from the wind to please her mind,
Notes from the lark I'll borrow:
Bird, prune thy wing, nightingale, sing,
To give my Love good-morrow;
To give my Love good-morrow
Notes from them all I'll borrow.

Wake from thy nest, Robin red-breast,
Sing, birds, in every furrow;
And from each bill, let music shrill
Give my fair Love good-morrow!

Blackbird and thrush in every bush,
Stare, linnet and cock-sparrow!
You pretty elves, amongst yourselves
Sing my fair Love good-morrow;
To give my Love good-morrow
Sing, birds, in every furrow!

97

GEORGE WITHER

1588-1667

SHALL I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Or make pale my cheeks with care
'Cause another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the Day,
Or the flow'ry meads in May,
If she be not so to me,
What care I how fair she be?

Should my heart be griev'd or pin'd
'Cause I see a woman kind?
Or a well dispos'd nature,
Join'd with a lovely feature?
Be she meeker, kinder, than
Turtle-dove or Pelican,
If she be not so to me,
What care I how kind she be?

Shall a woman's virtues move
Me to perish for her love?
Or, her well-deserving known,
Make me quite forget mine own?

Be she with that goodness blest
Which may merit name of best,
If she be not such to me,
What care I how good she be?

'Cause her fortune seems too high,
Shall I play the fool and die?
Those that bear a noble mind,
Where they want of riches find,
Think, what with them they would do,
That without them, dare to woo.
And, unless that mind I see,
What care I how great she be?

Great, or good, or kind, or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair,
If she love me, this believe:
I will die, ere she shall grieve.
If she slight me when I woo,
I can scorn, and let her go.
For if she be not for me,
What care I for whom she be?

98

ROBERT HERRICK

1591-1674

PHOEBUS, when that I a Verse
Or some numbers more rehearse;
Tune my words that they may fall
Each way smoothly Musically:
For which favour there shall be
Swans devoted unto thee,

MY faithful friend, if you can see
 The Fruit to grow up, or the Tree:
 If you can see the colour come
 Into the blushing Pear, or Plum:
 If you can see the Water grow
 To cakes of Ice, or flakes of Snow:
 If you can see, that drop of rain
 Lost in the wild sea, once again:
 If you can see, how Dreams do creep
 Into the Brain by easy sleep:
 Then there is hope that you may see
 Her love me once, who now hates me.

100

Upon Julia's Voice

So smooth, so sweet, so silv'ry is thy voice,
 As, could they hear, the Damn'd would make no noise,
 But listen to thee (walking in thy chamber)
 Melting melodious words, to lutes of amber.

101

Upon Julia's Hair Fill'd with Dew

DEW sate on Julia's hair,
 And spangled too,
 Like Leaves that laden are
 With trembling Dew:
 Or glitter'd to my sight,
 As when the Beams
 Have their reflected light,
 - Danc'd by the Streams.

The Night-piece to Julia

HER Eyes the Glow-worms lend thee,
 The Shooting Stars attend thee,
 And the Elves also,
 Whose little eyes glow,
 Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

No Will-o'-th'-Wisp mislight thee;
 Nor Snake, or Slow-worm bite thee:
 But on, on thy way
 Not making a stay,
 Since Ghost ther's none to affright thee.

Let not the dark thee cumber;
 What though the Moon do's slumber?
 The Stars of the night
 Will lend thee their light,
 Like Tapers clear without number.

Then Julia let me woo thee,
 Thus, thus to come unto me:
 And when I shall meet
 Thy silv'ry feet,
 My soul I'll pour into thee.

How Lilies Came White

WHITE though ye be; yet, Lilies know,
 From the first ye were not so:
 But I'll tell ye
 What befell ye;

Cupid and his Mother lay
In a Cloud; while both did play,
He with his pretty finger prest
The ruby niplet of her breast;
Out of the which, the cream of light,
Like to a Dew,
Fell down on you,
And made ye white.

104

His Prayer to Ben Jonson

WHEN I a Verse shall make,
Know I have pray'd thee,
For old Religions sake,
Saint Ben to aide me.

Make the way smooth for me,
When I, thy Herrick,
Honouring thee, on my knee
Offer my Lyrick.

Candles I'll give to thee,
And a new Altar;
And thou Saint Ben, shalt be
Writ in my Psalter.

Divination by a Daffadill

WHEN a Daffadill I see,
 Hanging down his head t'wards me;
 Guesse I may, what I must be:
 First, I shall decline my head;
 Secondly, I shall be dead;
 Lastly, safely buried.

To Meddowes

YE have been fresh and green,
 Ye have been fill'd with flowers:
 And ye the Walks have been
Where Maids have spent their houres.

Ye have beheld, how they
 With Wicker Arks did come
 To kisse, and beare away
 The richer Cowslips home.

Y'ave heard them sweetly sing,
 And seen them in a Round:
 Each Virgin, like a Spring,
 With Hony-suckles crown'd.

But now, we see none here,
 Whose silv'ry feet did tread,
 And with dishevell'd Haire
 Adorn'd this smoother Mead.

Like Unthrifths, having spent
Your stock, and needy grown,
Y'are left here to lament
Your poor estates, alone.

107

Upon a Virgin

HERE a solemn fast we keep,
While all beauty lies asleep.
Hushed be all things; (no noise here)
But the toning of a tear:
Or a sigh of such as bring
Cowslips for her covering.

108

Eternity

O YEARS, and age, farewell!
Behold I go
Where I do know
Infinity to dwell.

And these mine eyes shall see
All times, how they
Are lost i' the sea
Of vast Eternity.

Where never moon shall sway
The stars; but she
And night, shall be
Drowned in one endless day.

SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT

1606-1668

THE lark now leaves his wat'ry nest,
 And climbing shakes his dewy wings.
 He takes this window for the East,
 And to implore your light he sings—
 Awake, awake! the morn will never rise
 Till she can dress her beauty at your eyes.

The merchant bows unto the seaman's star,
 The ploughman from the sun his season takes;
 But still the lover wonders what they are
 Who look for day before his mistress wakes.
 Awake, awake! break thro your veils of lawn!
 Then draw your curtains, and begin the dawn!

110

WAKE all the dead! What ho! What ho!
 How soundly they sleep whose pillows lie low!
 They mind not poor lovers who walk above
 On the decks of the world in storms of love.
 No whisper now nor glance can pass
 Through wickets or through panes of glass;
 For our windows and churches are shut and barred.
 Lie close in the church and in the churchyard.
 In every grave make room, make room!
 The world's at an end, and we come, we come.

JOHN MILTON

1608-1674

Song on May Morning

Now the bright morning Star, Dayes harbinger,
Comes dancing from the East, and leads with her
The Flowry May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow Cowslip, and the pale Primrose.

Hail bounteous May that dost inspire
Mirth and youth, and warm desire,
Woods and Groves, are of thy dressing,
Hill and Dale, doth boast thy blessing.
Thus we salute thee with our early Song,
And welcom thee, and wish thee long.

Song from Arcades

NYMPHS and Shepherds dance no more
By sandy Ladons Lillied banks.

On old Lycaeus or Cyllene hoar,
Trip no more in twilight ranks,
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
A better soyl shall give ye thanks.

From the stony Maenalus,
Bring your Flocks, and live with us,
Here ye shall have greater grace,
To serve the Lady of this place.

Though Syrinx your Pans Mistres were
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.

Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

From *Comus*

SABRINA fair

Listen where thou art sitting
 Under the glassie, cool, translucent wave,
 In twisted braids of Lillies knitting
 The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair,
 Listen for dear honour's sake,
 Goddess of the silver lake,
 Listen and save.

Listen and appear to us
 In name of great Oceanus,
 By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
 And Tethys grave majestick pace,
 By hoary Nereus wrindled look,
 And the Carpathian wisards hook
 By scaly Tritons winding shell,
 And old sooth-saying Glaucus spell,
 By Leucothea's lovely hands,
 And her son that rules the strands,
 By Thetis tinsel-slipper'd feet,
 And the Songs of Sirens sweet,
 By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
 And fair Ligca's golden comb,
 Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
 Sleeking her soft alluring locks,
 By all the Nymphs that nightly dance
 Upon thy streams with wily glance,
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosie head
 From thy coral-pav'n bed,
 And bridle in thy headlong wave,
 Till thou our summons answered have.
 Listen and save.

EDMUND WALLER

1606-1689

Go, lovely Rose—
 Tell her that wastes her time and me,
 That now she knows,
 When I resemble her to thee,
 How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
 And shuns to have her graces spied,
 That hadst thou sprung
 In deserts, where no men abide,
 Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
 Of beauty from the light retired :
 Bid her come forth,
 Suffer herself to be desired,
 And not blush so to be admired.

Then die—that she
 The common fate of all things rare
 May read in thee;
 How small a part of time they share
 That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

SIR JOHN SUCKLING

1609-1642

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
 Prithee why so pale?
 Will, when looking well can't move her,
 Looking ill prevail?
 Prithee why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
 Prithee why so mute?
 Will, when speaking well can't win her,
 Saying nothing do't?
 Prithee why so mute?

Quit, quit for shame, this will not move,
 This cannot take her;
 If of her self she will not love,
 Nothing can make her.
 The devil take her!

116

Out upon it, I have lov'd
 Three whole days together;
 And am like to love three more,
 If it prove fair weather.

Time shall moult away his wings
 Ere he shall discover
 In the whole wide world agen
 Such a constant lover.

But the spite on't is, no praise
Is due at all to me:
Love with me had made no stays,
Had it any been but she.

Had it any been but she
And that very face,
There had been at least ere this
A dozen dozen in her place.

117

JAMES GRAHAM, MARQUESS OF MONTROSE

1612-1650

My dear and only Love, I pray
This noble world of thee
Be govern'd by no other sway
But purest monarchy.
For if confusion have a part,
Which virtuous souls abhor,
And hold a synod in thy heart,
I'll never love thee more.

Like Alexander I will reign,
And I will reign alone,
My thoughts shall evermore disdain
A rival on my throne.
He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That puts it not unto the touch,
To win or lose it all.

RICHARD LOVELACE

1618-1658

Going to the Wars

TELL me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
 That from the nunnery
 Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
 To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
 The first foe in the field;
 And with a stronger faith embrace
 A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
 As thou too shalt adore;
 I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
 Loved I not Honour more.

JOHN BUNYAN

1628-1688

*The Shepherd Boy Sings in the Valley of
 Humiliation*

He that is down needs fear no fall,
 He that is low, no pride;
 He that is humble ever shall
 Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
Little be it or much:
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is
That go on pilgrimage:
Here little, and hereafter bliss
Is best from age to age.

120

JOHN DRYDEN

1631-1700

Diana's Hunting Song

WITH horns and hounds, I waken the day,
And hie to my woodland-walks away;
I tuck up my robe, and am buskined soon,
And tie to my forehead a waxing moon.
I course the fleet stag, unkennel the fox,
And chase the wild goats o'er summits of rocks;
With shouting and hooting we pierce through the sky
And Echo turns hunter and doubles the cry.
*With shouting and hooting we pierce through the sky
And Echo turns hunter and doubles the cry.*

121

A Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1687

FROM harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
When nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,

And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
 "Arise, ye more than dead!"
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
 And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in Man.

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?
 When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
 And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound:
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
 Within the hollow of that shell,
 That spoke so sweetly, and so well.
What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

The trumpet's loud clangour
Excites us to arms,
With shrill notes of anger,
 And mortal alarms.
The double double double beat
Of the thundering drum
Cries Hark! the foes come;
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat!

The soft complaining flute,
In dying notes, discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs and desperation, -
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains, and height of passion
For the fair, disdainful dame.

But O, what art can teach,
What human voice can reach,
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To mend the choirs above.

Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees unrooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre;
But bright Cecilia rais'd the wonder higher:
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appear'd
Mistaking Earth for Heaven.

Grand Chorus

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the Blest above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky!

ALL, all of a piece throughout;
 Thy chase had a beast in view,
 Thy wars brought nothing about,
 Thy lovers were all untrue;
 'Tis well an old age is out
 And time to begin a new.

THOMAS DURFEE

1653-1723

I'LL sail upon the Dog-star,
 And then pursue the morning;
 I'll chase the Moon till it be noon,
 But I'll make her leave her horning.

I'll climb the frosty mountain,
 And there I'll coin the 'weather;
 I'll tear the rainbow from the sky
 And tie both ends together.

The stars pluck from their orbs too,
 And crowd them in my budget;
 And whether I'm a roaring boy,
 Let all the nation judge it.

JOHN GAY

1685-1732

Song from *The Beggar's Opera*

Macheath. WERE I laid on Greenland's coast,
And in my arms embrac'd my lass;
Warm amid eternal frost,
Too soon the half year's night could pass.

Polly. Were I sold on Indian soil,
Soon as the burning day was clos'd,
I could mock the sultry toil
When on my charmer's breast repos'd.

Macheath. And I would love you all the day

Polly. Every night would kiss and play,

Macheath. If with me you'd fondly stray

Polly. Over the hills and far away.

JOSEPH ADDISON

1672-1719

THE Spacious Firmament on high,
With all the blue Etherial Sky,
And spangled Heav'ns, a Shining Frame,
Their great Original proclaim;
Th' unwearied Sun, from day to day,
Doth his Creator's Power display,
And publishes to every Land
The Work of an Almighty Hand.

Soon as the Ev'ning Shades prevail,
The Moon takes up the wondrous Tale,
And nightly to the list'ning Earth
Repeats the Story of her Birth:
Whilst all the Stars that round her burn,
And all the Planets in their turn,
Confirm the Tidings as they rowl,
And spread the Truth from Pole to Pole.

What tho', in solemn Silence, all
Move round the dark terrestrial Ball?
What tho' nor real Voice nor Sound
Amid their radiant Orbs be found?
In Reason's Ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious Voice,
For ever singing as they shine,
"The Hand that made us is Divine."

126

ISAAC WATTS

1674-1748

OUR God, our Help in Ages past,
Our Hope for Years to come,
Our Shelter from the stormy Blast,
And our eternal Home.

Under the Shadow of Thy Throne
Thy Saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine Arm alone,
And our Defence is sure.

Before the Hills in order stood
Or Earth receiv'd her Frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless Years the same.

Thy Word commands our Flesh to Dust,
 Return, ye Sons of Men.
All Nations rose from Earth at first,
 And turn to Earth again.

A thousand Ages in Thy Sight
 Are like an Evening gone;
Short as the Watch that ends the Night
 Before the rising Sun.

The busy Tribes of Flesh and Blood
 With all their Lives and Cares
Are carried downward by Thy Flood,
 And lost in following Years.

Time like an ever-rolling Stream
 Bears all its Sons away;
They fly forgotten as a Dream
 Dies at the opening Day.

Like flow'ry Fields the Nations stood
 Pleas'd with the Morning-light;
The Flowers beneath the Mower's Hand
 Ly withering e'er 'tis Night.

Our God, Our Help in Ages past,
 Our Hope for Years to come,
Be thou our Guard while Troubles last
 And our eternal Home.

WILLIAM COWPER

1731-1800

God moves in a mysterious way
 His wonders to perform;
 He plants His footsteps in the sea,
 And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
 Of never-failing skill
 He treasures up His bright designs
 And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
 The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy, and shall break
 In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
 But trust Him for His grace;
 Behind a frowning providence
 He hides a smiling face.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
 And scan His work in vain;
 God is His own interpreter,
 And He will make it plain

ROBERT BURNS

1759-1796

Up in the morning's no' for me,
 Up in the morning early;
 When a' the hills are cover'd wi' snaw
 I'm sure it's winter fairly.

Cauld blaws the wind frae east to west,
 The drift is driving sairly;
 Sae loud and shrill's I hear the blast,
 I'm sure it's winter fairly.

The birds sit chittering in the thorn,
 A' day they fare but sparely;
 And lang's the night frae e'en to morn;
 I'm sure it's winter fairly.

129

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
 Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
 Welcome to your gory bed,
 Or to victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour,
 See the front o' battle lour;
 See approach proud Edward's power—
 Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
 Wha can fill a coward's grave?
 Wha sae base as be a slave?
 Let him turn and flee!

Wha, for Scotland's King and Law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or Free-man fa',
Let him on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die.

130

My Bonnie Mary

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
An' fill it in a silver tassie,
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie.
The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith,
Fu' loud the wind blows frae the ferry,
The ship rides by the Berwick-law,
And I maun leave my bonnie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are rankèd ready;
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody;
But it's no the roar o' sea or shore
Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
Nor shout o' war that's heard afar—
It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary!

Bonnie Lesley

O SAW ye bonnie Lesley
 As she gaed o'er the Border?
 She's gane, like Alexander,
 To spread her conquests farther.

To see her is to love her,
 And love but her for ever;
 For nature made her what she is,
 And ne'er made sic anither. . . .

'9

O MY Luve's like a red, red rose
 That's newly sprung in June:
 O my Luve's like the melodie
 That's sweetly played in tune.

As far art thou, my bonnie lass,
 So deep in luve am I:
 And I will luve thee still, my dear,
 Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
 I will luve thee still, my dear,
 While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve,
 And fare thee weel a while!
 And I will come again, my Luve,
 Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

The Farewell

It was a' for our rightfu' King
We left fair Scotland's strand;
It was a' for our rightfu' King
We e'er saw Irish land,
My dear—
We e'er saw Irish land.

Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain;
My love and native land farewell,
For I maun cròss the main,
My dear—
For I maun cross the main.

He turn'd him right and round about
Upon the Irish shore;
And gae his bridle-reins a shake
With, Adieu for evermore,
My dear—
With, Adieu for evermore.

The sodger frae the wars returns,
The sailor frae the main;
But I hae parted frae my love,
Never to meet again,
My dear—
Never to meet again.

When day is gane, and night is come,
And a' folk bound to sleep,
I think on him that's far awa',
The lee-lang night, and weep,
My dear—
The lee-lang night, and weep.

GEORGE GORDON BYRON, LORD BYRON

1788-1824

THERE be none of Beauty's daughters
 With a magic like thee;
 And like music on the waters
 Is thy sweet voice to me:
 When, as if its sound were causing
 The charmèd ocean's pausing
 The waves lie still and gleaming,
 And the lull'd winds seem dreaming:

And the midnight moon is weaving
 Her bright chain o'er the deep;
 Whose breast is gently heaving,
 As an infant's asleep:
 So the spirit bows before thee,
 To listen and adore thee;
 With a full but soft emotion,
 Like the swell of Summer's ocean.

We'll go no more a-roving

So, we'll go no more a-roving
 So late into the night,
 Though the heart be still as loving,
 And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
 And the soul wears out the breast,
 And the heart must pause to breathe,
 And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a-roving
By the light of the moon.

136

THOMAS MOORE

1779-1852

THE young May moon is beaming, love,
The glow-worm's lamp is gleaming, love;
How sweet to rove
Through Morna's grove,
When the drowsy world is dreaming, love!
Then awake!—the heavens look bright, my dear
'Tis never too late for delight, my dear;
And the best of all ways
To lengthen our days
Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear!

Now all the world is sleeping, love,
But the Sage, his star-watch keeping, love,
And I, whose star
More glorious far
Is the eye from that casement peeping, love.
Then awake!—till rise of sun, my dear,
The Sage's glass we'll shun, my dear,
Or in watching the flight
Of bodies of light
He might happen to take thee for one, my dear

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

1803-1849

If there were dreams to sell,
 What would you buy?
 Some cost a passing bell;
 Some a light sigh,
 That shakes from Life's fresh crown
 Only a rose-leaf down.
 If there were dreams to sell,
 Merry and sad to tell,
 And the crier rang the bell,
 What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
 With bowers nigh,
 Shadowy, my woes to still,
 Until I die.
 Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
 Fain would I shake me down.
 Were dreams to have at will,
 This would best heal my ill,
 This would I buy.

ALFRED TENNYSON, LORD TENNYSON

1809-1892

Song from *The Princess*

THE splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
 The long light shakes across the lakes
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.

Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And, answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

139

ROBERT BROWNING

1812-1889

Song from *Paracelsus*

HEAP cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair: such balsam falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unroll'd;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vow'd,
With moth'd and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

140

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850-1894

The Vagabond

GIVE to me the life I love,
Let the lave go by me,
Give the jolly heaven above
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river—
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever. . . .

II

A NEW SONG

'One of the biggest poetic revolutions that has ever occurred was the separation of lyric poetry from music'

C. DAY LEWIS
Poetry for You

NO revolution is really unexpected, and for a forecast of the change which came over lyric poetry on the threshold of the seventeenth century, you need look no farther than the difference between the poetry of Shakespeare's earlier and later plays. "What distinguishes the Jacobean age from the Elizabethan", writes F. P. Wilson, "is its more exact, more searching, more detailed enquiry into moral and political questions and its interest in the analysis of the mysteries and perturbations of the human mind."* A whole weight of new experience and new knowledge was pressing in on the age, and the time and poetry of glad acceptance was over.

"For godsake hold your tongue and let me love"; this staccato colloquial opening to a love lyric of Donne's tears Elizabethan lyric music asunder. "For not keeping of accent", said Ben Jonson, "Donne deserved hanging." But Donne could and did in his early songs like *Go and catch a falling star* (141), preserve a sweet, smooth music; in him it was the inclination, not the ability, for this kind of lyric which had gone. What he did was to introduce his own individual accent which was more that of the speaking than of the singing voice. Much of his poetry is "knotted", but it is knotted with thought. Matter became more, and manner less, important than it had been. As in our own age, there was a reaction against style in favour of sincerity. Donne and the so-called "Metaphysical Poets", as Peter Quennell clearly explains, "made an attempt to employ the jargon and symbolism of 'modern' knowledge and to stir the emotion by first stimulating thought".

Much seventeenth-century poetry was still the poetry of love, human and divine, but the time when it was the conventional thing for a poet to be in love with a conventional lady—when Daniel could change the hair of Delia from gold to sable in revising a sonnet, and there was so set a catalogue of beauties that Shakespeare could write in

* Elizabethan and Jacobean (Clarendon Press).

a pleasant exasperation, "My Mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"—was over. No one could be less in love with Love than Donne, but he was fascinated by the experiences of love, and equally by the personal aspect of death. "To the Middle Ages and the Elizabethans", Sidney Keyes observed in a diary entry, "Death was the leveller; to the seventeenth century, a metaphysical problem; to the eighteenth century, the end of life. . . ."

Lyric poetry as the private speech of the soul continued with beautiful diversity (for "The soul is a world of itself", wrote Keats, "and has enough to do in its own home") through Henry King and Marvell, and the devotional and mystical poets, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw, to the eighteenth-century prophet, Blake, most poetical of poets. He is said to have written his lyrics to airs of his own, "of singular beauty", but though some of the Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience are rare and pure lyric, with some mark of the hand of music upon them, essentially they are seldom songs for singing.

In the nineteenth century, the personal lyric found a fresh source of inspiration in nature and the weaving of the poet's moods and feelings into it. Coleridge describes the object of Wordsworth's early poems as being "to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awaking the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world before us". That feeling "analogous to the supernatural" was never more strongly induced than by the world of Shelley's lyrics, sweeping away the film of familiarity from his special elements, air, sky and water. The genius of Shelley was mainly in the short lyric, but that of Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson can only be seen to the full in what Drinkwater calls "the ampler lyric architecture" of the Ode, Elegy, and that most curious form in the whole of English poetry, the Sonnet, to which we are presently coming.

JOHN DONNE

1573-1631

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,
 Tell me where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the Devil's foot;
 Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
 Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
 Serves to advance an honest mind.

If thou be'st born to strange sights,
 Things invisible to see,
 Ride ten thousand days and nights
 Till Age snow white hairs on thee;
 Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me
 All strange wonders that befell thee,
 And swear
 No where
 Lives a woman true and fair.

If thou find'st one, let me know;
 Such a pilgrimage were sweet.
 Yet do not; I would not go
 Though at next door we might meet.
 Though she were true when you met her,
 And last, till you write your letter,
 Yet she
 Will be
 False, ere I come, to two or three.

The Good-morrow

I WONDER, by my troth, what thou and I
 Did, till we lov'd? Were we not wean'd till then?
 But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly?
 Or snorted we in the seven sleepers' den?
 'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
 If ever any beauty I did see,
 Which I desir'd, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking souls,
 Which watch not one another out of fear;
 For love, all love of other sights controls,
 And makes one little room, an every where.
 Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
 Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have shown,
 Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
 And true plain hearts do in the faces rest,
 Where can we find two better hemispheres
 Without sharp North, without declining West?
 Whatever dies, was not mixt equally;
 If our two loves be one, or thou and I
 Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

The Funeral

WHOEVER comes to shroud me, do not harm
 Nor question much
 That subtle wreath of hair which crowns my arm;
 The mystery, the sign you must not touch,

For 'tis my outward soul,
Viceroy to that which, unto heav'n being gone,
Will leave this to control
And keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution.

For if the sinewy thread my brain lets fall
Through every part
Can tie those parts, and make me one of all;
Those hairs, which upward grew, and strength and art
Have from a better brain,
Can better do't: except she meant that I
By this should know my pain,
As prisoners then are manacled, when they're condemned to die.

Whate'er she meant by't, bury it with me,
For since I am
Love's martyr, it might breed idolatry
If into other hands these reliques came.
As 'twas humility
T'afford to it all that a soul can do,
So 'tis some bravery
That, since you would have none of me, I bury some of you.

144

From *The Ecstasy*

WHERE, like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant bank swell'd up, to rest
The violet's reclining head,
Sat we two, one another's best.

Our hands were firmly cemented
By a fast balm which thence did spring
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes upon one double string.

So to engraft our hands, as yet
Was all the means to make us one;
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation.

As 'twixt two equal armies Fate
Suspends uncertain victory,
Our souls—which to advance their state
Were gone out—hung 'twixt her and me.

And whilst our souls negotiate there,
We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day the same our postures were,
And we said nothing, all the day.

145

From A Hymn to Christ

(at the Author's last going into Germany)

IN what torn ship soever I embark,
That ship shall be my emblem of thy ark;
What sea soever swallow me, that flood
Shall be to me an emblem of thy blood;
Though thou with clouds of anger do disguise
Thy face; yet through that mask I know those eyes,
Which, though they turn away sometimes,
They never will despise.

I sacrifice this island unto thee,
And all whom I lov'd there, and who lov'd me;
When I have put our seas twixt them and me,
Put thou thy sea betwixt my sins and thee.
As the trees' sap doth seek the root below
In winter, in my winter now I go,
Where none but thee, th' eternal root
Of true Love, I may know.

FRANCIS QUARLES

1592-1644

A Divine Rapture

E'EN like two little bank-dividing brooks,
 That wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
 And having ranged and search'd a thousand nooks,
 Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames,
 Where in a greater current they conjoin:
 So I my Best-belovèd's am: so He is mine.

E'en so we met; and after long pursuit,
 E'en so we joined; we both became entire;
 No need for either to renew a suit,
 For I was flax, and He was flames of fire:
 Our firm-united souls did more than twine;
 So I my Best-belovèd's am: so He is mine.

If all those glittering Monarchs, that command
 The servile quarters of this earthly ball,
 Should tender in exchange their shares of land,
 I would not change my fortunes for them all:
 Their wealth is but a counter to my coin:
 The world's but theirs; but my Belovèd's mine.

HENRY KING

1592-1669

A Contemplation upon Flowers

BRAVE flowers, that I could gallant it like you,
 And be as little vain,
 You come abroad, and make a harmless show,
 And to your beds of earth again;
 You are not proud, you know your birth,
 For your embroidered garments are from earth.

You do obey your months and times, but I
 Would have it ever spring,
 My fate would know no winter, never die
 Nor think of such a thing;
 O that I could my bed of earth but view
 And smile and look as cheerfully as you.

O teach me to see Death, and not to fear
 But rather to take truce;
 How often have I seen you at a bier,
 And there look fresh and spruce;
 You fragrant flowers, then teach me that my breath
 Like yours may sweeten and perfume my Death.

From The Exequy

SLEEP on, my Love, in thy cold bed
 Never to be disquieted!
 My last good night! Thou wilt not wake
 Till I thy fate shall overtake:

Till age, or grief, or sickness must
Marry my body to that dust
It so much loves; and fill the room
My heart keeps empty in thy tomb.
Stay for me there; I will not fail
To meet thee in that hollow Vale.
And think not much of my delay;
I am already on the way,
And follow thee with all the speed
Desire can make, or sorrows breed.
Each minute is a short degree,
And every hour a step towards thee.
At night when I betake to rest,
Next morn I rise nearer my west
Of life, almost by eight hours' sail,
Than when sleep breathed his drowsy gale.

Thus from the sun my bottom steers,
And my day's compass downward bears:
Nor labour I to stem the tide,
Through which to thee I swiftly glide.
'Tis true, with shame and grief I yield,
Thou, like the van, first took'st the field,
And gotten hast the victory
In thus adventuring to die
Before me, whose more years might crave
A just precedence in the grave.
But hark! my pulse like a soft drum
Beats my approach, tells thee I come;
And slow howe'er my marches be,
I shall at last sit down by thee.
The thought of this bids me go on,
And wait my dissolution
With hope and comfort. Dear (forgive
The crime), I am content to live
Divided, with but half a heart,
Till we shall meet and never part.

LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY

1583-1648

From *Elegy over a Tomb*

MUST I then see, alas! eternal night
 Sitting upon those fairest eyes,
 And closing all those beams, which once did rise
 So radiant and bright,
 That light and heat in them to us did prove
 Knowledge and Love?

Oh, if you did delight no more to stay
 Upon this low and earthly stage,
 But rather chose an endless heritage,
 Tell us at least, we pray,
 Where all the beauties that those ashes ow'd
 Are now bestow'd?

Doth the Sun now his light with yours renew?
 Have Waves the curling of your hair?
 Did you restore unto the Sky and Air,
 The red, and white, and blew?
 Have you vouchsaf'd to flowers since your death
 That sweetest breath?

GEORGE HERBERT

1593-1633

The Pulley

WHEN God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
Let us (said he) pour on him all we can.
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said he)
Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature.
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness.
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast.

Discipline

THROW away thy rod,
 Throw away thy wrath;
 O my God,
 Take the gentle path.

For my heart's desire
 Unto thine is bent;
 I aspire
 To a full consent.

Not a word or look
 I affect to own,
 But by book,
 And thy book alone.

Though I fail, I weep;
 Though I halt in pace,
 Yet I creep
 To the throne of grace.

Then let wrath remove;
 Love will do the deed;
 For with love
 Stony hearts will bleed.

Love is swift of foot;
 Love's a man of war,
 And can shoot
 And can hit from far.

Who can 'scape his bow?
 That which wrought on thee,
 Brought thee low,
 Needs must work on me.

Throw away thy rod:
Though man frailties hath,
Thou art God;
Throw away thy wrath.

152

Virtue

SWEET day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew shall weep thy fall tonight,
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue, angry and brave,
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

153

Easter

I GOT me flowers to straw thy way,
I got me boughs off many a tree;
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

Yet though my flowers be lost, they say
A heart can never come too late;
Teach it to sing thy praise this day,
And then this day my life shall date

154

Love

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here."
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah! my dear,
I cannot look on Thee."
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord! but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

JAMES SHIRLEY

1596-1666

THE glories of our blood and state
 Are shadows, not substantial things,
 There is no armour against fate,
 Death lays his icy hand on Kings,
 Sceptre and crown
 Must tumble down
 And in the dust be equal made,
 With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
 And plant fresh laurels where they kill,
 But their strong nerves at last must yield,
 They tame but one another still;
 Early or late
 They stoop to fate,
 And must give up their murmuring breath,
 When they pale captives creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow,
 Then boast no more your mighty deeds,
 Upon Death's purple altar now,
 See where the victor-victim bleeds,
 Your heads must come
 To the cold tomb;
 Only the actions of the just
 Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

WILLIAM HABINGTON

1605-1654

WHEN I survey the bright
 Celestial sphere;
 So rich with jewels hung, that night
 Doth like an Ethiop bride appear:

My soul her wings doth spread
 And heaven-ward flies,
 The Almighty's mysteries to read
 In the large volumes of the skies.

For the bright firmament
 Shoots forth no flame
 So silent, but is eloquent
 In speaking the Creator's name.

No unregarded star
 Contracts its light
 Into so small a character,
 Removed far from our human sight,

But if we steadfast look
 We shall discern
 In it, as in some holy book,
 How man may heavenly knowledge learn.

It tells the conqueror,
 That far-stretched power,
 Which his proud dangers traffic for,
 Is but the triumph of an hour;

That from the farthest north,
Some nation may,
Yet undiscovered, issue forth,
And o'er his new-got conquest sway:

Some nation yet shut in
With hills of ice
May be let out to scourge his sin,
Till they shall equal him in vice.

And then they likewise shall
Their ruin have;
For as yourselves your empires fall,
And every kingdom hath a grave.

Thus those celestial fires,
Though seeming mute,
The fallacy of our desires
And all the pride of life confute:

For they have watched since first
The world had birth;
And found sin in itself accurst,
And nothing permanent on earth.

157

SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT

1605-1668

To a Mistress Dying

Lover:

Your beauty, ripe and calm and fresh
As eastern summers are,
Must now, forsaking time and flesh,
Add light to some small star.

Philosopher:

Whilst she yet lives, were stars decayed,
Their light by hers relief might find;
But Death will lead her to a shade
Where Love is cold and Beauty blind.

Lover:

Lovers, whose priests all poets are,
Think every mistress, when she dies,
Is changed at least into a star,
And who dares doubt the poets wise?

Philosopher:

But ask not bodies doomed to die
To what abode they go;
Since Knowledge is but Sorrow's spy,
It is not safe to know.

158

JOHN CLEVELAND

1613-1658

WHEN as the nightingale chanted her vespers,
And the wild forester couched on the ground,
Venus invited me in the evening whispers
Unto a fragrant field with roses crowned,
Where she before had sent
My wishes' complement,
Unto my heart's content
Played with me on the green.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

First on her cherry cheeks I mine eyes feasted,
Thence fear of surfeiting made me retire;
Next on her warmer lips, which when I tasted,
My duller spirits made active as fire.

Then we began to dart,
Each at another's heart,
Arrows that knew no smart,
Sweet lips and smiles between.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

Wanting a glass to plait her amber tresses
Which like a bracelet rich decked mine arm,
Gaudier than Juno wears when as she graces
Jove with embraces more stately than warm;

Then did she peep in mine
Eyes' humour crystalline;
I in her eyes was seen
As if we one had been.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

Mystical grammar of amorous glances;
Feeling of pulses, the physic of love;
Rhetorical courtings and musical dances;
Numb'ring of kisses arithmetic prove;

Eyes like astronomy;
Straight-limbed geometry;
In her art's ingeny
Our wits were sharp and keen.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

SIR RICHARD FANSHAWE

1608-1666

Of Beauty

LET us use it while we may,
 Snatch those joys that haste away!
 Earth her winter coat may cast,
 And renew her beauty past:
 But, our winter come, in vain
 We solicit Spring again;
 And when our furrows snow shall cover,
 Love may return but never lover.

RICHARD CRASHAW

1613-1649

From The Shepherds' Hymn

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,
 Young dawn of the eternal day;
 We saw Thine eyes break from the East,
 And chase the trembling shades away:
 We saw Thee, and we blest the sight,
 We saw Thee by Thine own sweet light.

Poor world, said I, what wilt thou do
 To entertain this starry stranger?
 Is this the best thou canst bestow—
 A cold and not too cleanly manger?
 Contend, ye powers of heaven and earth,
 To fit a bed for this huge birth.

Welcome, all Wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in winter. Day in night.
Heaven in earth and God in Man.
Great little one! whose all-embracing birth
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.

161

Song of the Three Kings

LOOK up, sweet Babe, look up and see
For love of Thee
Thus far from home
The East is come
To seek herself in Thy sweet eyes.

To Thee, thou Day of Night, thou East of West,
Lo, we at last have found the way
To Thee the World's great universal East,
The general and indifferent Day.

O little All, in Thy embrace
The World lies warm, and likes his place;
Nor does his full globe fail to be
Kiss'd on both his cheeks by Thee.
Time is too narrow for Thy year,
Nor makes the whole World Thy half-sphere. . . .

*Upon the Book and Picture of the
Seraphical Saint Theresa*

O THOU undaunted daughter of desires!
By all thy dower of lights and fires;
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
By all thy lives and deaths of love;
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;
By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce desire,
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire;
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seized thy parting soul, and seal'd thee His;
By all the Heav'n thou hast in Him
(Fair sister of the seraphim!);
By all of Him we have in thee;
Leave nothing of myself in me.
Let me so read thy life, that I
Unto all life of mine may die!

EDWARD SHERRBURNE

1618-1702

And She Washed His Feet With Her Tears

THE proud Aegyptian Queen, her Roman Guest,
(T'express her Love in height of state and pleasure)
With pearl dissolv'd in gold, did feast,
Both food, and treasure.

And now (dear Lord) thy Lover, on the fair
And silver tables of thy feet, behold!
 Pearl in her tears, and in her hair,
 Offers thee Gold.

164

ANDREW MARVELL

1621-1678

To His Coy Mistress

HAD we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews;
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your hear
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

 But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.

Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful huc,
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapt power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife,
Thorough the iron gates of life;
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

165

The Mower to the Glow-worms

Ye living lamps, by whose dear light
The Nightingale does sit so late,
And studying all the summer night,
Her matchless songs does meditate;

Ye country comets, that portend
No war, nor Prince's funeral,
Shining unto no higher end
Than to presage the grasses fall;

Ye glow-worms, whose officious flame
To wand'ring mowers shows the way,
That in the night have lost their aim,
And after foolish fires do stray;

Your courteous lights in vain you waste,
Since Juliana here is come,
For she my mind hath so displac'd
That I shall never find my home.

166

ANONYMOUS

Yet if His Majesty, our sovereign lord,
Should of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say, "I'll be your guest to-morrow night,"
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work! "Let no man idle stand!

"Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall;
See they be fitted all;
Let there be room to eat
And order taken that there want no meat.
See every sconce and candlestick made bright,
That without tapers they may give a light.

"Look to the presence: are the carpets spread,
The dazie o'er the head,
The cushions in the chairs,
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?
Perfume the chambers, and in any case
Let each man give attendance in his place!"

Thus, if a king were coming, would we do;
And 'twere good reason too;
For 'tis a duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
And after all our travail and our cost,
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.

But at the coming of the King of Heaven
All's set at six and seven;
We wallow in our sin,
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn.
We entertain Him always like a stranger,
And, as at first, still lodge Him in the manger.

167

HENRY VAUGHAN

1621-1695

The Night

DEAR night! this world's defeat;
The stop to busy fools, care's check and curb,
The day of Spirits; my soul's calm retreat
Which none disturb!
Christ's progress, and his prayer time;
The hours to which high Heaven doth chime.

God's silent, searching flight;
When my Lord's head is fill'd with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
His still, soft call;
His knocking time; the soul's dumb watch
When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days
Calm and unhaunted as is Thy dark tent,
Whose peace but by some Angel's wing or voice
Is seldom rent;
Then I in Heav'n all the long year
Would keep, and never wander here.

There is in God (some say)
A deep but dazzling darkness; as men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear;
O for that night! where I in Him
Might live invisible and dim.

168

The Retreat

HAPPY those early days, when I
Shin'd in my Angel-infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy aught
But a white celestial thought:
When yet I had not walk'd above
A mile or two from my first Love,
And looking back—at that short space—
Could see a glimpse of His bright face:
When on some gilded cloud, or flow'r,
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity:
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My conscience with a sinful sound,

Or had the black art to dispense
A several sin to ev'ry sense,
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

O how I long to travel back,
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain
Where first I left my glorious train;
From whence th' enlightened spirit sees
The shady City of Palm-trees.
But ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way!
Some men a forward motion love,
But I by backward steps would move;
And when this dust falls to the urn,
In that state I came, return.

169

My Soul, there is a country
Afar beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged Sentry
All skilful in the wars.
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet peace sits, crowned with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious friend
And (O my Soul awake!)
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.

Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure,
But One who never changes,
Thy God, thy Life, thy Cure.

170

THEY are all gone into the world of Light,
And I alone sit lingering here:
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast
Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
Or those fair beams in which this hill is drest
After the Sun's remove.

I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days:
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmerings and decays.

O holy Hope, and high Humility,
High as the heavens above:
These are your walks, and you have show'd them me,
To kindle my cold love.

Dear beauteous Death, the Jewel of the Just,
Shining no-where but in the dark,
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
Could man outlook that mark!

He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest may know,
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair well or grove he sings in now
That is to him unknown.

And yet, as angels in some brighter dream
Call to the soul, when man doth sleep,
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,
And into glory peep.

If a star were confin'd into a tomb,
Her captive flames must needs burn there;
But when the hand that lock'd her up gives room,
She'll shine through all the sphere.

O Father of eternal life, and all
Created glories under thee,
Resume thy spirit from this world of thrall
Into true liberty.

Either disperse those mists, which blot and fill
My perspective still as they pass,
Or else remove me hence unto that hill
When I shall need no glass.

171

THOMAS TRAHERNE

1637?-1674

The Salutation

THESE little limbs,
These eyes and hands which here I find,
This panting heart wherewith my life begins,
Where have ye been? Behind
What curtain were ye from me hid so long?
Where was, in what abyss, my new-made tongue?

When silent I
So many thousand thousand years
Beneath the dust did in a chaos lie,
How could I, smiles or tears,
Or lips or hands or eyes or ears, perceive?
Welcome ye treasures which I now receive.

I that so long
Was nothing from eternity,
Did little think such joys as ear or tongue
To celebrate or see:
Such sounds to hear, such hands to feel, such feet,
Such eyes and objects, on the ground to meet.

New burnished joys
Which finest gold and pearl excel!
Such sacred treasures are the limbs of boys,
In which a soul doth dwell;
Their organized joints and azure veins
More wealth include than the dead world contains.

From dust I rise,
And out of nothing now awake;
These brighter regions which salute mine eyes,
A gift from God I take.
The earth, the seas, the light, the lofty skies,
The sun and stars are mine; if these I prize.

A stranger here
Strange things doth meet, strange glory see;
Strange treasures lodged in this fair world appear,
Strange all and new to me;
But that they mine should be, who nothing was,
The strangest is of all, yet brought to pass.

KATHERINE PHILIPS

1631-1664

I DID not live until this time
 Crown'd my felicity,
 When I could say without a crime
 "I am not thine but thee".

This carcass breath'd, and walkt, and slept,
 So that the world believ'd
 There was a soul the motions kept;
 But they were all deceiv'd.

For as a watch by art is wound
 To motion, such was mine:
 But never had Orinda found
 A soul till she found thine.

No bridegroom's nor crown-conqueror's mirth
 To mine compar'd can be:
 They have but pieces of this Earth,
 I've all the World in thee.

JOHN WILMOT, EARL OF ROCHESTER

1647-1680

ABSENT from thee, I languish still;
 Then ask me not, when I return?
 The straying fool 'twill plainly kill
 To wish all day, all night to mourn.

Dear, from thine arms then let me fly,
That my fantastic mind may prove
The torments it deserves to try,
That tears my fix'd heart from my love.

When, wearied with a world of woe,
To thy safe bosom I retire,
Where love, and peace, and truth does flow,
May I contented there expire.

Lest, once more wandering from that heaven,
I fall on some base heart unblest;
Faithless to thee, false, unforgiven,
And lose my everlasting rest.

174

WILLIAM BLAKE

1757-1827

O THOU with dewy locks, who lookest down
Thro' the clear windows of the morning, turn
Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,
Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring

The hills tell each other, and the list'ning
Valleys hear; all our longing eyes are turn'd
Up to thy bright pavilions, issue forth,
And let thy holy feet visit our clime.

Come o'er the eastern hills and let our winds
Kiss thy perfumèd garments; let us taste
Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy pearls
Upon our love-sick land that mourns for thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
Thy golden crown upon her languish'd head
Whose modest tresses were bound up for thee.

175

SLEEP, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep!
When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful night shall break.

176

NEVER seek to tell thy love,
Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind does move
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love;
I told her all my heart,
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears,
—Ah, she doth depart!

Soon as she was gone from me
A traveller came by,
Silently, invisibly.
—He took her with a sigh.

177

The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O, my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And, pointing to the East, began to say:

“Look at the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

“And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

“For when our souls have learn’d the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear His voice,
Saying, ‘Come out from the grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.’”

Thus did my mother say, and kissed me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I’ll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our Father’s knee;
And then I’ll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

178

. . . Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
It is right it should be so;
Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know,
Safely through the world we go. . . .

179

THE sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
The moon, like a flower
In heaven’s high bower,
With silent delight
Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy grove,
Where flocks have took delight:
Where lambs have nibbled, silent move
The feet of angels bright;
Unseen they pour blessing
And joy without ceasing
On each bud and blossom,
On each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest
Where birds are cover'd warm;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm:
If they see any weeping
That should have been sleeping,
They pour sleep on their head,
And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,
They pitying stand and weep,
Seeking to drive their thirst away
And keep them from the sheep.
But if they rush dreadful,
The angels, most heedful,
Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold:
And pitying the tender cries,
And walking round the fold:
Saying, "Wrath by His meekness,
And, by His health, sickness,
Are driven away
From our immortal day.

“And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
I can lie down and sleep,
Or think on Him who bore thy name,
Graze after thee, and weep.
For, wash'd in life's river,
My bright mane for ever
Shall shine like the gold
As I guard o'er the fold.”

180

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770-1850

The Cuckoo

O BLITHE New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice. a mystery;

176

. The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place
That is fit home for thee!

181

A SLUMBER did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

AMONG all lovely things my Love had been;
 Had noted well the stars, all flowers that grew
 About her home; but she had never seen,
 A glow-worm, never one, and this I knew.

While riding near her home one stormy night,
 A single glow-worm did I chance to spy;
 I gave a fervent welcome to the sight,
 And from my horse I leapt; great joy had I.

Upon a leaf the glow-worm did I lay,
 To bear it with me through the stormy night:
 And, as before, it shone without dismay;
 Albeit putting forth a fainter light.

When to the dwelling of my Love I came,
 I went into the orchard quietly;
 And left the glow-worm, blessing it by name,
 Laid safely by itself, beneath a tree.

The whole next day, I hoped, and hoped with fear;
 At night the glow-worm shone beneath the tree;
 I led my Lucy to the spot, "Look here,"
 O! joy it was for her, and joy for me!

SHE was a Phantom of delight
 When first she gleamed upon my sight;
 A lovely Apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament;
 Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;
 Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
 But all things else about her drawn
 From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;
 A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
 To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

184

JOHN CLARE

1793-1864

Written in Northampton Asylum

I AM: yet what I-am none cares or knows,
My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
I am the self-consumer of my woes
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;
And yet I am, and live with shadows tost

179

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
 Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
 But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
And e'en the dearest—that I loved the best—
Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;
 A place where woman never smiled or wept;
There to abide with my Creator, God,
 And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.

185

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

1792-1822

SWIFTLY walk over the western wave,
 Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
 Swift be thy flight.

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
 Star inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
 Come, long sought!

180

When I arose and saw the dawn,
 I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
 I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
 Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—and I replied,
 No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
 Come soon, soon!

186

From Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples

. . . I see the Deep's untrampled floor
 With green and purple sea-weeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
 Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone,—
 The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
 Arises from its measured motion . . .

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned . . .

Yet now despair itself is mild
Ev'n as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child
And weep away this life of care . . .

187

O WORLD! O Life! O Time! /
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night .
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring and summer and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

188

I FEAR thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine:
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine:
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine:

From *Prometheus* ✓

ON a poet's lips I slept
 Dreaming like a love adept
 In the sound his breathing kept;
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
 But feeds on the ærial kisses
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
 He will watch from dawn till gloom
 The lake-reflected sun illumine
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
 Nor heed nor see what things they be;
 But from these create he can
 Forms more real than living man,
 Nurslings of immortality.

ALFRED TENNYSON, LORD TENNYSON

1809-1892

TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depth of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
 In looking on the happy Autumn-fields
 And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail
 That brings our friends up from the underworld,
 Sad as the last which reddens over one
 That sinks with all we love below the verge:
 So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square:
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret—
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

191

O THAT 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again . . .

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee;
Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.

192

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white,
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:
The firefly wakens: waken thou with me.

Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the earth all Danae to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake:
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

193

ROBERT BROWNING

1812-1889

Meeting at Night

THE gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

Parting at Morning

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
 And the sun look'd over the mountain's rim:
 And straight was a path of gold for him,
 And the need of a world of men for me.

NAY but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
 And this last fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

Because you spend your lives in praising:
 To praise, you search the wide world over:
 Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
 Above this tress, and this, I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much!

EMILY BRONTË

1818-1848

Last Lines

No coward soul is mine,
 No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
 I see Heaven's glories shine,
 And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me hast rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as wither'd weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity;
So surely anchor'd on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy Spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

COVENTRY PATMORE

1823-1896

Indolence

HERE, in this little Bay,
 Full of tumultuous life and great repose,
 Where, twice a day,
 The purposeless, glad ocean comes and goes,
 Under high cliffs, and far from the huge town,
 I sit me down.
 For want of me the world's course will not fail;
 When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
 The truth is great, and shall prevail,
 When none cares whether it prevail or not.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

1828-1882

The Woodspurge

THE wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
 Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
 I had walked on at the wind's will,—
 I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
 My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
 My hair was over in the grass,
 My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,—
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

199

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

1830-1894

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
And leaves and silver fleur-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

WILLIAM MORRIS

1834-1896

Love is enough: though the World be a-waning
And the woods have no voice but the voice of complaining,
 Though the sky be too dark for dim eyes to discover
The gold-cups and daisies fair blooming thereunder,
Though the hills be held shadows, and the sea a dark wonder,
 And this day draw a veil over all things pass'd over,
Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not falter:
The void shall not weary, the fear shall not alter
 These lips and these eyes of the loved and the lover.

.

III

SONNET, ODE, ELEGY AND MEDITATION

"Poetry may move in a thousand ways: it may float like the swan, it may march with the pomp of waves, it may sigh like a little air among the ruins, or flutter like a dark nightingale seeking its nest among the soft leaves. Or it may rush like a tornado, sweeping the multitudes of doom before it."

EDITH SITWELL
The Pleasures of Poetry

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

1340?-1400

O YONGE flesshē folkēs, he or she,
 In which that love up groweth with your age,
 Repeyareth hoom from worldly vanitee,
 And of your herte up-casteth the visage
 To thilkē god that after his image
 Yow made, and thinketh al nis but a fayre
 This world, that passeth sone as flourēs fayre.

And loveth him, the which that right for love
 Upon a cross, our soulēs for to beye,
 First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene a-bove;
 For he nil falsen no wight, dar I seye,
 That wol his herte al hoolly on him leye.
 And sin he best to love is, and most meke,
 What nedeth feynēd lovēs for to seke?

Repeyareth] repair ye; thilkē] that;
 al nis] all is not; starf] died;
 nil falsen no wight] will be false to no one.

ANONYMOUS

1420

Inscription on a Mazer

HOLD yowre tunge and sey the best
 And let yowre neybore sitte in rest,
 Hoeso lustythe God to plesse
 Let hys neybore lyve in esse.

STEPHEN HAWES

d. 1523?

An Epitaph

O MORTAL folk, you may behold and see
 How I lie here, sometime a worthy knight;
 The end of joy and all prosperitee
 Is death at last, thorough his course and might:
 After the day there cometh the dark night,
 For though the daye be never so long,
 At last the bells ringeth to evensong.

JOHN SKELTON

1460?-1529

To Mistress Isabel Pennell

By Saint Mary, my lady,
 Your mammy and your daddy
 Brought forth a goodly baby.

My maiden Isabel,
 Reflaring rosabel,
 The flagrant camomel,

The ruddy rosary,
 The sovereign rosemary,
 The pretty strawberry,

reflaring] sweet-smelling;

The columbine, the nept,
The jelofer well set,
The proper violet;

Ennewed your colour
Is like the daisy flower
After the April shower.

Star of the morrow gray,
The blossom on the spray,
The freshest flower of May.

Maidenly demure,
Of womanhood the lure;
Wherefore I you assure

It were an heavenly health,
It were an endless wealth,
A life for God himself,

To hear this nightingale
Among the birdes small
Warbling in the vale,

"Dug, dug
Jug, jug!
Good year and good luck!"
With "Chück, chuck, chuck, chuck!"

nept] cat-mint;
jelofer] gilly-flower.

SIR THOMAS WYATT

1503-1542

Epitaph of Sir Thomas Gravener

UNDER this stone there lieth at rest
 A friendly man, a worthy knight,
 Whose heart and mind was ever prest
 To favour truth, to farther right.

The poor's defence, his neighbour's aid,
 Most kind always unto his kin,
 That stint all service that might be stayed,
 Whose gentle grace great love did win.

A man that was full earnest set
 To serve his prince at all assays;
 No sickness could him from that let,
 Which was the shortening of his days.

His life was good, he died full well,
 The body here, the soul in bliss.
 With length of words why should I tell
 Or farther show that well known is?

Since that the tears of more, and less
 Right well declare his worthiness.

stint] spared;
 let] hinder.

My galley, charged with forgetfulness,
 Thorough sharp seas in winter nights doth pass
 'Tween rock and rock; and eke mine enemy, alas!
 That is my Lord, steereth with cruelty;
 And every oar a thought in readiness,
 As though that death were light in such a case.
 An endless wind doth tear the sail apace
 Of forced sights, and trusty fearfulness;
 A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain,
 Hath done the wearied cords great hinderance,
 Wreathed with error and eke with ignorance.
 The stars be hid that led me to this pain.
 Drowned is reason that should me comfort,
 And I remain despairing of the port.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY

1517?-1547

So cruel prison how could betide, alas,
 As proud Windsor, where I in lust and joy
 With a king's son my childish years did pass
 In greater feast than Priam's sons of Troy?
 Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour;
 The large green courts where we were wont to hove
 With eyes cast up unto the maidens' tower,
 And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love;
 The stately sails, the ladies bright of hue,
 The dances short, long tales of great delight,
 With words and looks that tigers could but rue,
 Where each of us did plead the other's right;
 The palm-play where, despoiled for the game,
 With dazed eyes oft we by gleams of love
 Have missed the ball and got sight of our dame,
 To bait her eyes, which kept the leads above;

The gravelled ground, with sleeves tied on the **helm**,
 On foaming horse, with swords and friendly **hearts**,
 With cheer, as though the one should overwhelm,
 Where we have fought and chased oft with darts;
 With silver drops the meads yet spread for ruth,
 In active games of nimbleness and strength,
 Where we did strain, trailed by swarms of youth,
 Our tender limbs that yet shot up in length;
 The secret groves which oft we made resound
 Of pleasant plaint and of our ladies' praise,
 Recording soft what grace each one had found,
 What hope of speed, what dread of long delays;
 The wild forest, the clothed holts with green,
 With rein ahaled, and swift ybreathed horse,
 With cry of hounds and merry blasts between,
 Where we did chase the fearful hart a force;
 The void walls eke that harboured us each night,
 Wherewith, alas! revive within my breast
 The sweet accord, such sleeps as yet delight,
 The pleasant dreams, the quiet bed of rest,
 The secret thoughts imparted with such trust,
 The wanton talk, the divers change of play,
 The friendship sworn, each promise kept so just,
 Wherewith we passed the winter nights away. . . .

ahaled] lowered;
 a force] vigorous.

208

Spring

THE sooté season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
 With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale:
 The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
 The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.

soote] sweet;
 make] mate;

Summer is come, for every spray now springs:
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;
The fishes flete with new repaired scale.
The adder all her slough away she slings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she mings;
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.

And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs.

dings] mingles.

209

MARTIALl, the things that doe attain
The happy life, be these I finde,
The riches left, not got with pain;
The fruitfull ground, the quiet minde,
The egall frend; no grudge, no strife;
No charge of rule, nor governaunce;
Without disease, the healthful life;
The household of continuance;
The meane dyet, no delicate fare;
Trew wisdomes joynde with simplenesse;
The night discharged of all care;
Where wine the witte may not oppresse.
The faithfull wife, without debate;
Such slepes as may begile the night;
Contented with thine owne estate,
Ne wishe for death, ne feare his might.

egall] equal.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

1552?-1618

To his son

THREE things there be that prosper all apace
 And flourish while they grow asunder far;
 But on a day, they meet all in a place,
 And when they meet, they one another mar.
 And they be these: the wood, the weed, the wag.
 The wood is that which makes the gallows tree;
 The weed is that which strings the hangman's bag;
 The wag, my pretty knave, betokens thee.
 Now mark, dear boy, while these assemble not,
 Green springs the tree, hemp grows, the wag is wild;
 But when they meet, it makes the timber rot,
 It frets the halter, and it chokes the child.

Then bless thee, and beware, and let us pray
 We part not with thee at this meeting day.

His Epitaph

EVEN such is Time, that takes in trust
 Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
 And pays us but with earth and dust;
 Who in the dark and silent grave,
 When we have wander'd all our ways,
 Shuts up the story of our days;
 But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
 My God shall raise me up, I trust.

ANONYMOUS

Epitaph: On Sir Walter Rawleigh at his Execution

GREAT heart, who taught thee so to die?
 Death yielding thee the victory?
 Where took'st thou leave of life? if there,
 How couldst thou be so freed from fear?
 Be sure thou dy'st and quit'st the state
 Of flesh and blood before thy fate.
 Else what a miracle were wrought,
 To triumph both in flesh and thought?
 I saw in every stander by,
 Pale death, life only in thine eye:
 Th' example that thou left'st was then,
 We look for when thou diest agen.
 Farewell, truth shall thy story say,
 We died, thou only liv'dst that day.

Epigram: On Sir Francis Drake

SIR DRAKE, whom well the worlds end knew,
 Which thou didst compass round,
 And whom both Poles of Heaven once saw,
 Which North and South do bound,
 The Stars above would make thee known,
 If men here silent were;
 The Sun himself cannot forget
 His fellow Traveller.

LET not the sluggish sleep
 Close up thy waking eye,
 Until with judgment deep
 Thy daily deeds thou try:
 He that one sin in conscience keeps
 When he to quiet goes,
 More venturous is than he that sleeps
 With twenty mortal foes.

NICHOLAS BRETON

1545?-1626?

WHO can live in heart so glad
 As the merry country lad?
 Who upon a fair green balk
 May at pleasure sit and walk.
 And amid the azure skies
 See the morning sun arise;
 While he hears in every spring
 How the birds do chirp and sing;
 Or before the hounds in cry
 See the hare go stealing by;
 Or along the shallow brook
 Angling with a baited hook,
 See the fishes leap and play
 On a blessed sunny day;
 Or to hear the partridge call
 Till she have her covey all;
 Or to see the subtle fox,
 How the villain plies the box,

After feeding on his prey
How he closely sneaks away
Through the hedge and down the furrow,
Till he gets into his burrow;
Then the bee to gather honey,
And the little black haired coney
On a bank for sunny place
With her forefeet wash her face:
Are not these, with thousands more
Than the courts of kings do know,
The true pleasing spirit's sights
That may breed true love's delights?

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SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

1554-1586

Two Sonnets of Astrophel

WITH how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies!
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What! may it be that even in heavenly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long-with-love acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
I read it in thy looks; thy languished grace,
To me, that feel the like, thy state describes.
Then, even of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there, ungratefulness?

COME, sleep, O sleep, the certain knot of peace,
 The bating place of wit, the balm of woe,
 The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
 Th' indifferent judge between the high and low;
 With shield of proof shield me from out the ptease
 Of those fierce darts despair at me doth throw;
 O make me in those civil wars to cease;
 I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
 Take of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
 A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
 A rosy garland and a weary head;
 And if these things, as being thine by right,
 Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
 Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

ptease] crowd.

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LEAVE me, O Love, which reachest but to dust;
 And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;
 Grow rich in that which never taketh rust;
 Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings.
 Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
 To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be;
 Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light,
 That doth both shine and give us sight to see.
 O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide
 In this small course which birth draws out to death,
 And think how evil becometh him to slide,
 Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath
 Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see;
 Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me.

EDMUND SPENSER

1552?-1599

From *An Elegie, or Friend's Passion, for
His Astrophill*

WHEN he descended down the mount,
His personage seemed most divine,
A thousand graces one might count,
Upon his lovely cheerfull eie;
To heare him speake and sweetly smile,
You were in Paradise the while.

A sweet attractive kinde of grace,
A full assurance given by lookes,
Continuall comfort in a face,
The lineaments of gospell bookes,
I trowe that countenance cannot lie,
Whose thoughts are legible in the eie.

Was never eie did see that face,
Was never eare did heare that tong,
Was never minde did minde his grace,
That ever thought the travell long;
But eies and eares, and ev'ry thought,
Were with his sweete perfections caught.

O God, that such a worthy man,
In whom so rare desarts did raigne,
Desired thus, must leave us than,
And we to wish for him in vaine!
O could the stars, that bred that wit,
In force no longer fixed sit!

From *Daphnaida, An Elegy*

SHE fell away in her first ages spring,
 Whil'st yet her leafe was greene, and fresh her rinde,
 And whil'st her braunch faire blossoms foorth did bring,
 She fell away against all course of kinde.
 For age to die is right, but youth is wrong;
 She fell away like fruit blowne downe with winde.
 Weepe, Shepheard! weepe, to make my undersong.

Yet fell she not as one enforst to dye,
 Ne dyde with dread and grudging discontent,
 But as one toyld with travaile downe doth lye,
 So lay she downe, as if to sleepe she went,
 And closde her eyes with carelesse quietnesse;
 The whiles soft deth away her spirit hent,
 And soul assayld from sinfull fleshlinesse.

And ever as I see the starres to fall,
 And under ground to goe to give them light
 Which dwell in darknes, I to minde will call
 How my fair Starre (that shinde on me so bright)
 Fell sodainly and faded under ground;
 Since whose departure, day is turned to night,
 And night without a Venus starre is found.

From *Epithalamion*

WAKE now, my love, awake; for it is time.
 The rosy morn long since left Tithones bed,
 All ready to her silver coach to climb,
 And Phoebus 'gins to shew his glorious head.

Hark how the cheerful birds do chant their lays
And carol of love's praise.
The merry lark her matins sings aloft,
The thrust replies, the mavis descant plays,
The ouzel shrills, the ruddock warbles soft,
So goodly all agree with sweet consent,
To this day's merriment.
Ah! my dear love, why do ye sleep thus long,
When meeter were that ye should now awake,
T' await the coming of your joyous make,
And harken to the birds' love-learned song
The dewy leaves among?
For they of joy and pleasance to you sing,
That all the woods them answer and their echo ring.

Hark how the minstrels 'gin to shrill aloud
Their merry music that resounds from far,
The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling crowd,
That well agree withouten breach or jar.
But most of all the damsels do delight
When they their timbrels smite,
And thereunto do dance and carol sweet,
That all the senses they do ravish quite,
The whiles the boys run up and down the street,
Crying aloud with strong confusèd noise,
As if it were one voice.
Hymen, Io Hymen, Hymen, they do shout,
That even to the heavens their shouting shrill
Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill,
To which the people standing all about,
As in approvance do thereto applaud
And loud advance her laud,
And evermore they Hymen, Hymen, sing,
That all the woods them answer and their echo ring.

make] mate; crowd] fiddle.

Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in,
And all the posts adorn as doth behove,
And all the pillars deck with garlands trim,
For to receive this saint with honour due,
That cometh in to you.
With trembling steps and humble reverence,
She cometh in, before th' Almighty's view.
Of her, ye virgins, learn obedience,
When so ye come into those holy places,
To humble your proud faces:
Bring her up to th' high altar, that she may
The sacred ceremonies there partake,
The which do endless matrimony make,
And let the roaring organs loudly play
The praises of the Lord in lively notes,
The while with hollow throats
The choristers the joyous anthem sing,
That all the woods may answer and their echo ring.

Now all is done; bring home the bride again,
Bring home the triumph of our victory;
Bring home with you the glory of her gain,
With joyance bring her and with jollity.
Never had man more joyful day than this,
Whom heaven would heap with bliss.
Make feast therefore now all this live-long day,
This day for ever to me holy is;
Pour out the wine without restraint or stay,
Pour not by cups, but by the bellyful,
Pour out to all that will,
And sprinkle all the posts and walls with wine,
That they may sweat and drunken be withal.
Crown ye god Bacchus with a coronal,
And Hymen also crown with wreaths of vine,
And let the Graces dance unto the rest;
For they can do it best:

The whiles the maidens do their carol sing,
To which the woods shall answer and their echo ring.

Ah! when will this long weary day have end,
And lend me leave to come unto my love?
How slowly do the hours their numbers spend!
How slowly does sad Time his feathers move!
Haste thee, O fairest planet, to thy home
Within the western foam;
Thy tired steeds long since have need of rest.
Long though it be, at last I see it gloom,
And the bright evening star with golden crest
Appear out of the east.
Fair child of beauty, glorious lamp of love,
That all the host of heaven in ranks dost lead,
And guidest lovers through the night's dread,
How cheerfully thou lookest from above,
And seem'st to laugh atween thy twinkling light,
As joying in the sight
Of these glad many which for joy do sing,
That all the woods them answer and their echo ring.

Now cease, ye damsels, your delights forepast;
Enough is it, that all the day was yours.
Now day is done, and night is nighing fast;
Now bring the bride into the bridal bowers.
Now night is come, now soon her disarray,
And in her bed her lay;
Lay her in lilies and in violets,
And silken curtains over her display,
And odoured sheets, and Arras coverlets.
Behold how goodly my fair love does lie
In proud humility;
Like unto Maia, when as Jove her took
In Tempe, lying on the flowery grass,
'Twixt sleep and wake, after she weary was,
With bathing in the Acidalian brook

Now it is night, ye damsels may be gone,
And leave my love alone,
And leave likewise your former lay to sing;
The woods no more shall answer, nor your echo ring.

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Prothalamion

CALM was the day, and through the trembling air
Sweet breathing Zephyrus did softly play,
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay
Hot Titan's beams, which then did glister fair;
When I (whom sullen care,
Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
In prince's court, and expectation vain
Of idle hopes, which still do fly away
Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain)
Walked forth to ease my pain
Along the shore of silver streaming Thames,
Whose rutty bank, the which his river hems,
Was painted all with variable flowers,
And all the meads adorned with dainty gems,
Fit to deck maidens' bowers,
And crown their paramours,
Against the bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

There, in a meadow, by the river's side,
A flock of nymphs I chanced to espy,
All lovely daughters of the flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks all loose untied,
As each had been a bride;
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs entrail'd curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,

And with fine fingers cropped full feateously
The tender stalks on high.
Of every sort, which in that meadow grew,
They gathered some, the violet pallid blue,
The little dusky, that at evening closes,
The virgin lily, and the primrose true,
With store of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegrooms' posies,
Against the bridal day, which was not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song

With that, I saw two swans of goodly hue
Come softly swimming down along the Lee;
Two fairer birds I yet did never see
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew,
Nor Jove himself, when he a swan would be
For love of Leda, whiter did appear
Yet Leda was (they say) as white as he,
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing near
So purely white they were,
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,
Seemed foul to them and bade his billows spare
To wet their silken feathers, lest they might
Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair,
And mar their beauties bright,
That shone as heaven's light,
Against their bridal day, which was not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Eftsoons the nymphs, which now had flowers their fill,
Ran all in haste, to see that silver brood,
As they came floating on the crystal flood.
Whom when they saw, they stood amazed still,
Their wondering eyes to fill,
Them seemed they never saw a sight so fair,
Of fowls so lovely, that they sure did deem

Them heavenly born, or to be that same pair
Which through the sky draw Venus' silver team;
For sure they did not seem
To be begot of any earthly seed,
But rather angels or of angels' breed:
Yet were they bred of Somers-heat they say,
In sweetest season, when each flower and weed
The earth did fresh array,
So fresh they seemed as day,
Even as their bridal day, which was not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Then forth they all out of their baskets drew
Great store of flowers, the honour of the field,
That to the sense did fragrant odours yield,
All which upon those goodly birds they threw,
And all the waves did strew,
That like old Peneus' waters they did seem,
When down along by pleasant Tempe's shore,
Scattered with flowers, through Thessaly they stream,
That they appear through lilies' plenteous store,
Like a bride's chamber-floor.
Two of these nymphs, meanwhile, two garlands bound,
Of freshest flowers which in that mead they found,
The which presenting all in trim array,
Their snowy foreheads therewithal they crownéd,
Whilst one did sing this lay,
Prepared against that day,
Against their bridal day, which was not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

"Ye gentle birds, the world's fair ornament,
And heaven's glory, whom this happy hour
Doth lead unto your lovers' blissful bower,
Joy may you have and gentle heart's content
Of your love's couplement:

[Somers-heat] summer's heat, word-play on Somerset.

And let fair Venus, that is queen of love,
And her heart-quelling son upon you smile,
Whose smile, they say, hath virtue to remove
All love's dislike, and friendship's faulty guile
For ever to assoil.

Let endless peace your steadfast hearts accord,
And blessed plenty wait upon your board,
And let your bed with pleasures chaste abound,
That fruitful issue may to you afford,
Which may your foes confound,
And make your joys redound,
Upon your bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song."

So ended she; and all the rest around
To her redoubled that her undersong,
Which said, their bridal day should not be long.
And gentle echo from the neighbour ground
Their accents did resound.

So forth those joyous birds did pass along,
Adown the Lee, that to them murmured low,
As he would speak, but that he lacked a tongue,
Yet did by signs his glad affection show,
Making his stream run slow.
And all the fowl which in his flood did dwell
'Gan flock about these twain, that did excel
The rest so far as Cynthia doth shend
The lesser stars. So they, enrangèd well,
Did on those two attend,
And their best service lend,
Against their bridal day, which was not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

At length they all to merry London came,
To merry London, my most kindly nurse,

shend] shame.

That to me gave this life's first native source;
Though from another place I take my name,
An house of ancient fame.
There when they came, whereas those bricky towers,
The which on Thames' broad aged back do ride,
Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers,
There whilom wont the Templar Knights to bide,
Till they decayed through pride:
Next whereunto there stands a stately place,
Where oft I gaincd gifts and goodly grace
Of that great lord, which therein wont to dwell,
Whose wants too well now feels my friendless case.
But ah! here fits not well
Old woes but joys to tell
Against the bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Yet therein now doth lodge a noble peer,
Great England's glory and the world's wide wonder,
Whose dreadful name late through all Spain did thunder,
And Hercules' two pillars standing near
Did make to quake and fear.
Fair branch of honour, flower of chivalry,
That fillest England with thy triumph's fame,
Joy have thou of thy noble victory,
And endless happiness of thine own name
That promiseth the same:
That through thy prowess and victorious arms,
Thy country may be freed from foreign harms;
And great Elisa's glorious name may ring
Through all the world, filled with thy wide alarms,
Which some brave Muse may sing
To ages following,
Upon the bridal day, which is not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

From those high towers this noble lord issuing,
 Like radiant Hesper when his golden hair
 In th' Ocean billows he hath bathed fair,
 Descended to the river's open viewing,
 With a great train ensuing.
 Above the rest were goodly to be seen
 Two gentle knights of lovely face and feature,
 Beseeming well the bower of any queen,
 With gifts of wit and ornaments of nature,
 Fit for so goodly stature;
 That like the twins of Jove they seemed in sight,
 Which deck the baldric of the heavens bright,
 They two forth pacing to the river's side,
 Received those two fair birds, their love's delight,
 Which at th' appointed tide
 Each one did make his bride,
 Against their bridal day, which is not long:
 Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

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Easter

Most glorious Lord of Lyfe! that, on this day,
 Didst make Thy triumph over death and sin;
 And, having harrowed hell, didst bring away
 Captivity, thence captive, us to win:
 This joyous day, deare Lord, with joy begin;
 And grant that we, for whom thou diddest dye,
 Being with Thy deare blood cleane washt from sin,
 May live for ever in felicity!
 And that Thy love we weighing worthily,
 May likewise love Thee for the same againe;
 And for Thy sake, that all lyke deare didst buy,
 With love may one another entertayne!
 So let us love, deare Love, lyke as we ought,
 —Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564-1616

Sonnets

SHALL I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed;
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest,
 Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou growest;
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

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WHEN to the sessions of sweet silent thought
 I summon up remembrance of things past,
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
 Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
 And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
 And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:
 Then can I grieve at grievances foregone
 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
 The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
 Which I new pay as if not paid before.
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restored and sorrows end.

TAKE all my loves, my Love, yea, take them all;
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
 No love, my Love, that thou mayst true love call;
 All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.
 Then, if for my love thou my love receivest,
 I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest;
 But yet be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest
 By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.
 I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,
 Although thou steal thee all my poverty;
 And yet love knows it is a greater grief
 To bear love's wrong than hate's known injury.
 Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,
 Kill me with spites; yet we must not be foes.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
 Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
 Give warning to the world that I am fled
 From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
 Nay, if you read this line, remember not
 The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.
 O! if, I say, you look upon this verse,
 When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
 But let your love even with my life decay;
 Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
 And mock you with me after I am gone.

THAT time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
 As after sunset fadeth in the west;
 Which, by and by black night doth take away,
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
 Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
 This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

FAREWELL! thou art too dear for my possessing,
 And like enough thou know'st thy estimate:
 The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
 My bonds in thee are all determinate.
 For how do I hold thee but by thy granting?
 And for that riches where is my deserving?
 The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
 And so my patent back again is swerving.
 Thyself thou gavest, thy own worth then not knowing,
 Or me, to whom thou gavest it, else mistaking;
 So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
 Comes home again, on better judgment making.
 Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,
 In sleep a king, but, waking, no such matter.

How like a winter hath my absence been
 From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
 What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
 What old December's bareness everywhere!
 And yet this time removed was summer's time,
 The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,
 Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,
 Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease.
 Yet this abundant issue seemed to me
 But hope of orphans and unfathered fruit;
 For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
 And, thou away, the very birds are mute.
 Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer,
 That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
 For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
 Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
 Have from the forests shook three summers' pride:
 Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned
 In process of the seasons have I seen,
 Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned,
 Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
 Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
 Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;
 So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
 Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived.
 For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred:
 Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead!

WHEN in the chronicle of wasted time
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
 In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights,
 Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
 Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
 I see their antique pen would have expressed
 Even such a beauty as you master now.
 So all their praises are but prophecies
 Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
 And, for they looked but with divining eyes,
 They had not skill enough your worth to sing:
 For we, which now behold these present days,
 Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

LET me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove.
 O no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wandering bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out ev'n to the edge of doom.
 If this be error, and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

POOR soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
 Fooled by those rebel powers that thee array,
 Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth
 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
 Why so large cost, having so short a lease
 Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
 Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
 Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
 Within be fed, without be rich no more:
 So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
 And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

JOSEPH SYLVESTER

1563-1618

WERE I as base as is the lowly plain,
 And you, my Love, as high as heaven above,
 Yet should the thoughts of me, your humble swain,
 Ascend to heaven in honour of my love.
 Were I as high as heaven above the plain,
 And you, my Love, as humble and as low
 As are the deepest bottoms of the main,
 Wheresoe'er you were, with you my love would go.
 Were you the earth, dear Love, and I the skies,
 My love should shine on you like to the Sun,
 And look upon you with ten thousand eyes,
 Till heaven wax'd blind, and till the world were done.
 Wheresoe'er I am—below, or else above you—
 Wheresoe'er you are, my heart shall truly love you.

MICHAEL DRAYTON

1563-1631

SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part,
 Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;
 And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free.
 Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
 And when we meet at any time again,
 Be it not seen in either of our brows
 That we one jot of former love retain.
 Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
 When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
 When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
 And Innocence is closing up his eyes,
 —Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
 From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

From *The Sixth Nymphal*

CLEAR had the day been from the dawn,
 All chequer'd was the sky,
 Thin clouds like scarves of cobweb lawn
 Veiled heaven's most glorious eye.
 The wind had no more strength than this,
 That leisurely it blew,
 To make one leaf the next to kiss,
 That closely by it grew.
 The rills that on the pebbles play'd,
 Might now be heard at will;
 This world they only music made,
 Else everything was still . . .

THOMAS NASHE

1567-1601

From In Plague Time

BEAUTY is but a flower
 Which wrinkles will devour;
 Brightness falls from the air,
 Queens have died young and fair,
 Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
 I am sick, I must die.

Lord, have mercy on us!

Strength stoops unto the grave,
 Worms feed on Hector brave,
 Swords may not fight with fate.
 Earth still holds ope her gate.
 Come! come! the bells do cry.
 I am sick, I must die.

Lord, have mercy on us!

Wit with his wantonness
 Tasteth death's bitterness;
 Hell's executioner
 Hath no ears for to hear
 What vain art can reply.
 I am sick, I must die.

Lord, have mercy on us!

SIR HENRY WOTTON

1565-1639

A Description of the Spring

AND now all Nature seemed in love:
 The lusty sap began to move;
 New juice did stir the embracing vines,
 And birds had drawn their valentines;
 The jealous trout, that low did lie,
 Rose at a well-dissembled fly;
 There stood my friend, with patient skill
 Attending of his trembling quill.
 Already were the eaves possessed
 With the swift pilgrims' daubed nest:
 The groves already did rejoice
 In Philomel's triumphing voice.
 The showers were short, the weather mild,
 The morning fresh, the evening smiled.
 Joan takes her neat-rubbed pail, and now
 She trips to milk the sand-red cow;
 Where, for some sturdy football swain,
 Joan strokes a sillabub or twain.
 The fields and gardens were beset
 With tulip, crocus, violet;
 And now, though late, the modest rose
 Did more than half a blush disclose.
 Thus all looked gay, all full of cheer
 To welcome the new-liveried year.

*Upon the sudden restraint of the Earl of
Somerset, then falling from favour*

DAZZLED thus with height of place,
Whilst our hopes our wits beguile,
No man marks the narrow space
'Twixt a prison and a smile.

Then since Fortune's favours fade,
You that in her arms do sleep,
Learn to swim and not to wade;
For the hearts of Kings are deep.

But if greatness be so blind,
As to trust in towers of air,
Let it be with goodness lined,
That at least the fall be fair.

Then though darkened you shall say,
When friends fail and Princes frown,
Virtue is the roughest way,
But proves at night a bed of down.

JOHN DONNE

1573-1631

DEATH, be not proud, though some have callèd thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so:
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death; nor yet canst thou kill me.

For Rest and Sleep, which but thy picture be,
 Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow;
 And soonest our best men with thee do go—
 Rest of their bones and souls' delivery!
 Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
 And dost with poison, war and sickness dwell;
 And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
 And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?
 One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
 And Death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die!

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EDMUND BOLTON

1575?—1633?

As withereth the primrose by the river,
 As fadeth summer's sun from gliding fountains,
 As vanisheth the light-blown bubble ever,
 As melteth snow upon the mossy mountains:
 So melts, so vanisheth, so fades, so withers
 The rose, the shine, the bubble, and the snow
 Of praise, pomp, glory, joy (which short life gathers)
 Fair praise, vain pomp, sweet glory, brittle joy.
 The withered primrose by the mourning river,
 The faded summer's sun from weeping fountains,
 The light-blown bubble vanished for ever,
 The molten snow upon the naked mountains,
 Are emblems that the treasures we up-lay
 Soon wither, vanish, fade and melt away.

BEN JONSON

1573-1637

On his first son

FAREWELL, thou child of my right hand, and joy,
 My sin was too much love of thee, lov'd boy,
 Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
 Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
 O could I lose all father, now. For why
 Will man lament the state he should envy?
 To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,
 And, if no other misery, yet age?
 Rest in soft peace, and, ask'd, say here doth lie
 Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.
 For whose sake, henceforth, all his vows be such,
 As what he loves may never like too much.

Epitaph on the Countess Dowager of Pembroke

UNDERNEATH this sable hearse
 Lies the subject of all verse,
 Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:
 Death, ere thou hast slain another
 Learned and fair and good as she,
 Time shall throw a dart at thee.

From An ode to the memory of two friends

It is not growing like a tree
 In bulk, doth make man better be;
 Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
 To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere;
 A lily of a day
 Is fairer far in May,
 Although it fall and die that night;
 It was the plant and flower of light.
 In small proportions we just beauties see;
 And in short measures, life may perfect be.

FALSE world, good night! since thou hast brought
 That hour upon my morn of age;
 Henceforth I quit thee from my thought,
 My part is ended on thy stage.

Yes, threaten, do. Alas! I fear,
 As little as I hope from thee:
 I know thou canst not show nor bear
 More hatred than thou hast to me.

But what we're born for, we must bear:
 Our frail condition it is such
 That what to all may happen here,
 If 't chance to me, I must not grutch.

Else I my state should much mistake
To harbour a divided thought
From all my kind—that, for my sake,
There should a miracle be wrought.

No, I do know that I was born
To age, misfortune, sickness, grief:
But I will bear these with that scorn
As shall not need thy false relief.

Nor for my peace will I go far,
As wanderers do, that still do roam;
But make my strengths, such as they are,
Here in my bosom, and at home.

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CYRIL TOURNEUR

1575?–1625

Epitaph on a Soldier

His body lies interred within this mould,
Who died a young man yet departed old:
And in all strength of youth that man can have
Was ready still to drop into his grave:
For aged in virtue, with a youthful eye
He welcomed it, being still prepared to die,
And living so, though young deprived of breath,
He did not suffer an untimely death;
But we may say of his brave blest decease—
He died in war, and yet he died in peace.

RICHARD, BISHOP CORBET

1582-1635

*To his Son, Vincent Corbet, on his Birth-Day,
being then Three Years old*

WHAT I shall leave thee none can tell,
But all shall say I wish thee well;
I wish thee, Vin, before all wealth,
Both bodily and ghostly health:
Nor too much wealth, nor wit, come to thee
So much of either may undoe thee.
I wish thee learning, not for show,
Enough for to instruct, and know;
Not such as Gentlemen require,
To prate at Table, or at Fire.
I wish thee all thy mothers graces,
Thy fathers fortunes, and his places.
I wish thee friends, and one at Court,
Not to build on, but support;
To keep thee, not in doing many
Oppressions, but from suffering any.
I wish thee peace in all thy ways,
Not lazy nor contentious days;
And when thy soul and body part,
As innocent as now thou art.

SIR JOHN BEAUMONT

1583-1627

Of my dear Son, Gervase Beaumont

CAN I, who have for others oft compiled
 The songs of death, forget my sweetest child,
 Which like a flower crushed, with a blast is dead,
 And ere full time hangs down his smiling head,
 Expecting with clear hope to live anew
 Among the angels fed with heavenly dew?
 We have this sign of joy, that many days,
 While on the earth his struggling spirit stays,
 The name of Jesus in his mouth contains,
 His only food, his sleep, his ease from pains.
 O may that sound be rooted in my mind,
 Of which in him such strong effect I find.
 Dear Lord, receive thy son, whose winning love
 To me was like a friendship, far above
 The course of nature, or his tender age,
 Whose looks could all my bitter griefs assuage;
 Let his pure soul ordained seven years to be
 In that frail body, which was part of me,
 Remain my pledge in heaven, as sent to shew,
 How to this port at every step I go.

LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY

1583-1648

Sonnet of Black Beauty

BLACK beauty, which above that common light,
 Whose power can no colours here renew
 But those which darkness can again subdue,
 Dost still remain unvaried to the sight,
 And like an object equal to the view,
 Art neither changed with day, nor hid with night;
 When all those colours which the world calls bright,
 And which old poetry doth so pursue,
 Are with the night so perished and gone
 That of their being there remains no mark,
 Thou still abidest so entirely one,
 That we may know thy blackness is a spark
 Of light inaccessible, and alone
 Our darkness, which can make us think it dark.

WILLIAM STRODE

1602-1645

WHEN Westwell Downs I 'gan to tread,
 Where cleanly winds the green did sweep,
 Methought a landscape there was spread,
 Here a bush and there a sheep;
 The pleated wrinkles on the face
 Of wave-swoln earth did lend such grace,
 As shadowings in imagery
 Which both deceive and please the eye.

The sheep sometimes did tread a maze
By often winding in and in,
And sometimes round about they trace
Which milkmaids call a fairy ring.
Such semi-circles have they run,
Such lines across so trimly spun,
That shepherds learn, whene'er they please,
A new geometry with ease.

Here and there two hilly crests
Amidst them hug a pleasant green,
And these are like two swelling breasts
That close a tender fall between.
Here could I read or sleep or pray
From early morn till flight of day:
But hark! a sheep's bell calls me up,
Like Oxford college bells, to sup.

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JOHN CLEVELAND

1613-1658

Epitaph on the Earl of Strafford

HERE lies wise and valiant dust,
Huddled up 'twixt fit and just:
Strafford, who was hurried hence
'Twixt treason and convenience.
He spent his time here in a mist,
A Papist, yet a Calvinist;
His Prince's nearest joy and grief:
He had, yet wanted, all relief:
The prop and ruin of the State,
The people's violent love and hate.

One in extremes lov'd and abhorr'd,
Riddles lie here, or in a word,
Here lies blood, and let it lie,
Speechless still, and never cry.

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JOHN MILTON

1608-1674

✓

L'Allegro

HENCE loathèd Melancholy
Of Cerberus, and blackest midnight born,
In Stygian Cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,
Find out som uncouth cell,
Where brooding darknes spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-Raven sings;
There under Ebon shades, and low-brow'd Rocks,
As ragged as thy Locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But com thou Goddess fair and free,
In Heav'n ycleap'd Euphrosync,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more
To Ivy-crowned Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as som Sager sing)
The frolick Wind that breathes the Spring,
Zephir with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There on Beds of Violets blew,
And fresh-blown Roses washt in dew,

Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,
 So bucksom, blith, and debonair.
 Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee
 Jest and youthful Jollity,
 Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
 Nods, and Becks, and Wreathèd Smiles,
 Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
 And love to live in dimple sleek;
 Sport that wrinckled Care derides,
 And Laughter holding both his sides.
 Corn, and trip it as ye go
 On the light fantastick toe,
 And in thy right hand lead with thee,
 The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty;
 And if I give thee honour due,
 Mirth, admit me of thy crue
 To live with her, and live with thee,
 In unprovèd pleasures free;
 To hear the Lark begin his flight,
 And singing startle the dull night,
 From his watch-towre in the skies,
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
 Then to com in sight of sorrow,
 And at my window bid good morrow,
 Through the Sweet-Briar, or the Vinc,
 Or the twisted Eglantine.
 While the Cock with lively din,
 Scatters the rear of darknes thin,
 And to the stack, or the Barn dore,
 Stoutly struts his Dames before,
 Oft list'ning how the Hounds and horn
 Chearly rouse the slumbring morn,
 From the side of som Hoar Hill,
 Through the high wood echoing shrill.
 Som time walking not unseen
 By Hedge-row Elms, on Hillocks green,
 Right against the Eastern gate,

When the great Sun begins his state,
 Rob'd in flames, and Amber light,
 The clouds in thousand Liveries dight.
 While the Plowman neer at hand,
 Whistles ore the Furrow'd Land,
 And the Milkmaid singeth blithe,
 And the Mower whets his sithe,
 And every Shepherd tells his tale
 Under the Hawthorn in the dale.
 Streit mine eye hath caught new pleasures
 Whilst the Lantskip round it measures,
 Russet Lawns, and Fallows Gray,
 Where the nibling flocks do stray,
 Mountains on whose barren brest
 The labouring clouds do often rest:
 Meadows trim with Daisies pide,
 Shallow Brooks, and Rivers wide.
 Towers, and Battlements it sees
 Boosom'd high in tufted Trees,
 Wher perhaps som beauty lies,
 The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
 Hard by, a Cottage chimney smokes,
 From betwixt two aged Okes,
 Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
 Are at their savory dinner set
 Of Hearbs, and other Country Messes,
 Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
 And then in haste her Bowre she leaves,
 With Thestylis to bind the Sheaves;
 Or if the earlier season lead
 To the tann'd Haycock in the Mead,
 Som times with secure delight
 The up-land Hamlets will invite,
 When the merry Bells ring round,
 And the jocond rebecks sound
 To many a youth, and many a maid,
 Dancing in the Chequer'd shade;

And young and old com forth to play
 On a Sunshine Holyday,
 Till the live-long day-light fail,
 Then to the Spicy Nut-brown Ale,
 With stories told of many a feat,
 How Faery Mab the junkets eat,
 She was pincht, and pull'd, she sed,
 And he by Friars Lanthorn led
 Tells how the drudging Goblin swet,
 To ern his Cream-bowle duly set,
 When in oue night, ere glimps of morn,
 His shadowy Flae hath thresh'd the Corn
 That ten day-labourers could not end,
 Then lies him down the Lubbar Fend.
 And stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
 And Crop-full out of dores he flings,
 Ere the first Cock his Mattin rings.
 Thus don the Tales, to bed they creep,
 By whispering Windes soon lull'd asleep.
 Towred Cities please us then,
 And the busie humm of men,
 Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold,
 In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold,
 With store of Ladies, whose bright eies
 Rain influence, and judge the prise
 Of Wit, or Arms, while both contend
 To win her Grace, whom all commend.
 There let Hymen oft appear
 In Saffron robe, with Taper clear,
 And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
 With mask, and antique Pageantry,
 Such sights as youthfull Poets dream
 On Summer eeves by haunted stream.
 Then to the well-trod stage anon,
 If Jonsons learned Sock be on,
 Or sweetest Shakespear fancies childe,

Warble his native Wood-notes wilde,
 And ever against eating Cares,
 Lap me in soft Lydian Aires,
 Married to immortal verse
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce
 In notes, with many a winding bout
 Of lincked sweetnes long drawn out,
 With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
 The melting voice through mazes running;
 Untwisting all the chains that ty
 The hidden soul of harmony.
 That Orpheus self may heave his head
 From golden slumber on a bed
 Of heapt Elysian flowres, and hear
 Such streins as would have won the ear
 Of Pluto, to have quite set free
 His half regain'd Eurydice.
 These delights, if thou canst give,
 Mirth with thee, I mean to live.

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On the late Massacre in Piedmont

AVENGE O Lord thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
 Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold,
 Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old
 When all our Fathers worship't Stocks and Stones,
 Forget not: in thy book record their groanes
 Who were thy Sheep and in their antient Fold
 Slayn by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd
 Mother with Infant down the Rocks. Their moans

The Vales redoubl'd to the Hills, and they
 To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
 O're all th'Italian fields where still doth sway
 The triple Tyrant: that from these may grow
 A hunder'd-fold, who having learnt thy way
 Early may fly the Babylonian wo.

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On his Blindness

WHEN I consider how my light is spent,
 E're half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one Talent which is death to hide,
 Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, least he returning chide,
 Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd,
 I fondly ask; But patience to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
 Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
 Bear his milde yoaik, they serve him best, his State
 Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
 And post o're Land and Ocean without rest:
 They also serve who only stand and waite.

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From Samson Agonistes

O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
 Blind among enemies, O worse then chains,
 Dungeon, or beggery, or decrepit age!
 Light the prime work of God to me is extinct,
 And all her various objects of delight
 Annull'd, which might in part my grief have cas'd,

Inferiour to the vilest now become
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me,
 They creep, yet see, I dark in light expos'd
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong,
 Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
 In power of others, never in my own;
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more then half.
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
 Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse
 Without all hope of day!
 O first created Beam, and thou great Word,
 Let there be light, and light was over all;
 Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree?
 The Sun to me is dark
 And silent as the Moon,
 When she deserts the night
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
 Since light so necessary is to life,
 And almost life itself, if it be true
 That light is in the Soul,
 She all in every part; why was the sight
 To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd?
 So obvious and so easie to be quench't,
 And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,
 That she might look at will through every pore?
 Then had I not been thus exil'd from light;
 As in the land of darkness yet in light,
 To live a life half dead, a living death,
 And buried; but O yet more miserable!
 My self, my Sepulcher, a moving Grave,
 Buried, yet not exempt
 By priviledge of death and burial
 From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs,
 But made hereby obnoxious more
 To all the miseries of life,
 Life in captivity
 Among inhuman foes.

From *Samson Agonistes*

ALL is best, though we oft doubt,
 What th' unsearchable dispose
 Of highest wisdom brings about,
 And ever best found in the close.
 Oft he seems to hide his face,
 But unexpectedly returns
 And to his faithful Champion hath in place
 Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns
 And all that band them to resist
 His uncontrollable intent,
 His servants he with new acquist
 Of true experience from this great event
 With peace and consolation hath dismiss,
 And calm of mind all passion spent.

EDMUND WALLER

1606-1687

Of the last Verses in the Book

THE seas are quiet when the winds give o'er;
 So calm are we when passions are no more.
 For then we know how vain it was to boast
 Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.
 Clouds of affection from our younger eyes
 Conceal that emptiness which age describes.

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new light through chinks that Time hath made:
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

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ABRAHAM COWLEY

1618-1677

Drinking

THE thirsty earth soaks up the rain,
And drinks and gapes for drink again;
The plants suck in the earth, and are
With constant drinking fresh and fair;
The sea itself (which one would think
Should have but little need of drink)
Drinks twice ten thousand rivers up,
So fill'd that they o'erflow the cup.
The busy sun (and one would guess
By's drunken fiery face no less)
Drinks up the sea, and when he's done,
The Moon and Stars drink up the Sun;
They drink and dance by their own light,
They drink and revel all the night:
Nothing in Nature's sober found,
But an eternal health goes round.
Fill up the bowl, then, fill it high,
Fill all the glasses there—for why
Should every creature drink but I?
Why, Man of Morals, tell me why?

From *On the Death of Mr. William Herve,*

My dearest friend, would I had died for thee!
 Life and this world henceforth will tedious be;
 Nor shall I know hereafter what to do
 If once my griefs prove tedious too.
 Silent and sad I walk about all day,
 As sullen ghosts stalk speechless by
 Where their hid treasures lie;
 Alas, my treasure's gone; why do I stay?

Ye fields of Cambridge, our dear Cambridge, say
 Have ye not seen us walking every day?
 Was there a tree about which did not know
 The love betwixt us two?
 Henceforth, ye gentle trees, forever fade;
 Or your sad branches thicker join
 And into darksome shades combine,
 Dark as the grave wherein my friend is laid!

Large was his soul: as large a soul as e'er
 Submitted to inform a body here;
 High as the place 'twas shortly in Heaven to have,
 But low and humble as his grave.
 So high that all the virtues there did come,
 As to their chiefest seat
 Conspicuous and great;
 So low that for me too it made a room.

ANDREW MARVELL

1621-1678

From *The Garden*

WHAT wondrous life is this I lead!
 Ripe apples drop about my head;
 The luscious clusters of the vine
 Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
 The nectarine, and curious peach,
 Into my hands themselves do reach;
 Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
 Insnares with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
 Withdraws into its happiness;
 The mind, that ocean where each kind
 Does straight its own resemblance find;
 Yet it creates, transcending these,
 Far other worlds, and other seas,
 Annihilating all that's made
 To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
 Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
 Casting the body's vest aside,
 My soul into the boughs does glide;
 There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
 Then whets and combs its silver wings,
 And, till prepared for longer flight,
 Waves in its plumes the various light.

Such was that happy garden-state,
 While man there walked without a mate:

After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one,
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skilful gardener drew
Of flowers, and herbs, this dial new;
Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run,
And, as it works, the industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we!
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers?

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WHERE the remote Bermudas ride,
In the ocean's bosom unespied,
From a small boat, that rowed along,
The listening winds received this song:

"What should we do but sing His praise
That led us through the watery maze,
Where He the huge sea-monsters wracks,
That lift the deep upon their backs;
Unto an isle so long unknown
And yet far kinder than our own?
He lands us on a grassy stage,
Safe from the storms, and prelate's rage.
He gave us this eternal spring,
Which here enamels everything,
And sends the fowls to us in care,
On daily visits through the air;

He hangs in shades the orange bright,
 Like golden lamps in a green night,
 And does in the pomegranates close
 Jewels more rich than Ormus shows;
 He makes the figs our mouths to meet,
 And throws the melons at our feet;
 But apples plants of such a price,
 No tree could ever bear them twice;
 With cedars chosen by His hand,
 From Lebanon, He stores the land,
 And makes the hollow seas, that roar,
 Proclaim the ambergris on shore;
 He cast (of which we rather boast)
 The Gospel's pearl upon our coast,
 And in these rocks for us did frame
 A temple where to sound His name.
 Oh! let our voice His praise exalt,
 Till it arrive at Heaven's vault,
 Which, thence (perhaps) rebounding, may
 Echo beyond the Mexique Bay."

Thus sung they, in the English boat,
 An holy and a cheerful note;
 And all the way, to guide their chime,
 With falling oars they kept the time.

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ANNE, COUNTESS OF WINCHELSEA

1661-1720

TRAIL all your pikes, dispirit every drum,
 March in a slow procession from afar,
 Ye silent, ye dejected men of war!
 Be still the hautboys, and the flute be dumb!

Display no more, in vain, the lofty banner.
For see, where on the bier before ye lies
The pale, the fall'n, th' untimely sacrifice
To your mistaken shrine, to your false idol, Honour.

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MATTHEW PRIOR

1664-1721

*A Letter to The Honourable Lady
Miss Margaret-Cavendish-Holles-Harley*

My noble, lovely, little Peggy,
Let this my First-Epistle, beg ye
At dawn of morn, and close of even,
To lift your heart and hands to heaven:
In double duty say your pray'r,
Our father first, then notre père;
And, dearest Child, along the day,
In ev'ry thing you do and say,
Obey and please my Lord and Lady,
So God shall love, and Angels aid ye,
If to these Precepts You attend,
No Second-Letter need I send,
And so I rest Your Constant Friend,

M. P.

ALEXANDER POPE

1688-1744

Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady

WHAT beckoning ghost, along the moonlight shade,
 Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?
 'Tis she!—but why that bleeding bosom gored,
 Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?
 Oh ever beauteous, ever friendly, tell,
 Is it, in heaven, a crime to love too well?
 To bear too tender, or too firm a heart,
 To act a lover's, or a Roman's part?
 Is there no bright reversion in the sky,
 For those who greatly think, or bravely die?

Why bade ye else, ye Powers! her soul aspire
 Above the vulgar flight of low desire?
 Ambition first sprung from your blest abodes:
 The glorious fault of angels and of gods:
 Thence to their images on earth it flows,
 And in the breasts of kings and heroes glows.
 Most souls, 'tis true, but peep out once an age,
 Dull sullen prisoners in the body's cage:
 Dim lights of life, that burn a length of years,
 Useless, unseem, as lamps in sepulchres;
 Like eastern kings, a lazy state they keep,
 And, close confined to their own palace, sleep.

From these perhaps (ere nature bade her die),
 Fate snatched her early to the pitying sky.
 As into air the purer spirits flow,
 And separate from their kindred dregs below;
 So flew the soul to its congenial place,
 Nor left one virtue to redeem her race.

But thou, false guardian of a charge too good,
 Thou, mean deserter of thy brother's blood!

See on these ruby lips the trembling breath,
These cheeks now fading at the blast of death;
Cold is that breast which warmed the world before
And those love-darting eyes must roll no more.
Thus, if eternal justice rules the ball,
Thus shall your wives, and thus your children fall;
On all the line a sudden vengeance waits,
And frequent hearses shall besiege your gates;
There passengers shall stand, and pointing say,
(While the long funerals blacken all the way)
Lo! these were they, whose souls the Furies steeled,
And curst with hearts unknowing how to yield.
Thus unlamented pass the proud away,
The gaze of fools, and pageant of a day!
So perish all, whose breast ne'er learned to glow
For others' good, or melt at others' woe.

What can atone (O ever injured shade!)
Thy fate unpitied, and thy rites unpaid?
No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear,
Pleased thy pale ghost, or graced thy mournful bier:
By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned,
By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned!
What though no friends in sable weeds appear;
Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year,
And bear about the mockery of woe
To midnight dances, and the public show?
What though no weeping Loves thy ashes grace,
Nor polished marble emulate thy face?
What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
Nor hallowed dirge be muttered o'er thy tomb?
Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast:
There shall the Morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year shall blow;
While angels with their silver wings o'ershade

The ground now sacred by thy relics made
So, peaceful rests, without a stone, a name,
What once had beauty, titles, wealth, and fame.
How loved, how honoured once, avails thee not,
To whom related or by whom begot;
A heap of dust alone remains of thee;
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be!

Poets themselves must fall, like those they sung,
Deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue.
Even he, whose soul now melts in mournful lays,
Shall shortly want the generous tear he pays;
Then from his closing eyes thy form shall part,
And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart,
Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er,
The Muse forgot, and thou beloved no more.

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Man

KNOW then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a God, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused or disabused;

Created half to rise and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

And his Dwelling

(Upon the Duke of Marlborough's House at Woodstock)

"SEE, sir, here's the grand approach,
This way is for his Grace's coach:
There lies the bridge, and here's the clock,
Observe the lion and the cock,
The spacious court, the colonnade,
And mark how wide the hall is made!
The chimneys are so well design'd,
They never smoke in any wind.
This gallery's contrived for walking,
The windows to retire and talk in;
The council chamber for debate,
And all the rest are rooms of state."
"Thanks, sir," cried I, "'tis very fine,
But where d'ye sleep, or where d'ye dine?
I find by all you have been telling
That 'tis a house, but not a dwelling."

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JOHN DYER

1700?-1758

Grongar Hill

Grongar Hill invites my Song,
Draw the Landskip bright and strong . . .
Below me Trees unnumber'd rise,
Beautiful in various Dies;

The gloomy Pine, the Poplar blue,
The yellow Beech, the sable Yew,
The slender Firr, that taper grows,
The sturdy Oak with broad-spread Boughs;
And beyond the purple Grove,
Haunt of *Phillis*, Queen of Love!
Gawdy as the op'ning Dawn,
Lies a long and level Lawn,
On which a dark Hill, steep and high,
Holds and charms the wand'ring Eye!
Deep are his Feet in *Towy's* Flood,
His Sides are cloath'd with waving Wood
And ancient towers crown his brow,
That cast an awful Look below; . . .
While, ever and anon, there falls
Huge heaps of hoary moulder'd Walls.
Yet Time has seen, that lifts the low,
And level lays the lofty Brow,
Has seen this broken Pile compleat,
Big with the Vanity of State;
But transient is the smile of Fate!
A little Rule, a little Sway,
A Sun-beam in a Winter's day
Is all the Proud and Mighty have,
Between the Cradle and the Grave.

And see the Rivers how they run,
Thro' Woods and Meads, in Shade and Sun,
Sometimes swift, and sometimes slow,
Wave succeeding Wave they go
A various Journey to the Deep,
Like human Life to endless Sleep!
Thus is Nature's Vesture wrought,
To instruct our wand'ring Thought;
Thus she dresses green and gay,
To disperse our Cares away.

Ever charming, ever new,
When will the Landskip tire the View!

The Fountain's Fall, the River's Flow,
 The woody Vallies, warm and low:
 The windy Summit, wild and high,
 Roughly rushing on the Sky!
 The pleasant Seat, the ruin'd Tow'r,
 The naked Rock, the shady Bow'r;
 The Town and Village, Dome and Farin,
 Each gives each a double Charm,
 As Pearls upon an *Aethiop's* Arm. . . .

Be full, ye Courts; be great who will;
 Search for Peace with all your Skill:
 Open wide the lofty Door,
 Seck her on the marble Floor:
 In vain ye search, she is not there;
 In vain ye search the Domes of Care!
 Grass and Flowers Quiet treads,
 On the Meads, and Mountain-heads,
 Along with Pleasure, close ally'd,
 Ever by each other's Side,
 And often, by the murm'ring Rill,
 Hears the Thrush, while all is still,
 Within the Groves of Grongar Hill.

267

SAMUEL JOHNSON

1709-1784

Lines on the Death of Mr. Levett

CONDEMN'D to Hope's delusive mine,
 As on we toil from day to day,
 By sudden blast or slow decline,
 Our social comforts drop away.

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Well try'd through many a varying year,
See *Levett* to the grave descend;
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of ev'ry friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills Affection's eye,
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind,
Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny
Thy praise to merit unrefin'd. . . .

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And sure th' Eternal Master found
His single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm, his powers were bright,
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no throbs of fiery pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way.

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THOMAS GRAY

1716-1771

Elegy written in a Country Churchyard

THE Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

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Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke.
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,
If Memory o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"I here at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as it scoru,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn":

THE EPITAPH.

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

WILLIAM COLLINS

1721-1759

Ode to Evening

If ought of Oaten Stop, or Pastoral Song,
 May hope, O pensive Eve, to sooth thine Ear,
 Like thy own solemn springs,
 Thy Springs, and dying Gales,

O Nymph reserv'd, while now the bright-hair'd Sun
 Sits in yon western Tent, whose cloudy Skirts,
 With Brede ethereal wove,
 O'erhang his wavy Bed:

Now Air is hush'd, save where the weak-ey'd Bat,
 With short shrill Shriek flits by on leathern Wing,
 Or where the Beetle winds
 His small but sullen Horn,

As oft he rises 'midst the twilight Path,
 Against the Pilgrim born in heedless Hum:
 Now teach me, Maid compos'd,
 To breathe some soften'd Strain,

Whose Numbers stealing thro' thy dark'ning Vale,
 May not unseemly with its Stillness suit,
 As musing slow, I hail
 Thy genial lov'd Return!

For when thy folding Star arising shews
 His paly Circlet, at his warning Lamp
 The fragrant Hours, and Elves
 Who slept in Buds the Day,

And many a Nymph who wreaths her Brows with Sedge,
And sheds the fresh'ning Dew, and lovelier still,
The Pensive Pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shadowy Car.

Then let me rove some wild and heathy Scene,
Or find some Ruin, 'midst its dreary Dells,
Whose Walls more awful nod
By thy religious Gleams.

Or if chill blust'ring Winds, or driving Rain,
Prevent my willing Feet, be mine the Hut,
That from the Mountain's Side,
Views Wilds, and swelling Floods,

And Hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd Spires,
And hears their simple Bell, and marks o'er all
Thy Dewy Fingers draw
The gradual dusky Veil. . . .

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Ode

(Written in the beginning of the year 1746)

How sleep the Brave, who sink to Rest,
By all their Country's Wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy Fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallow'd Mold,
She there shall dress a sweeter Sod,
Than Fancy's Feet have ever trod.

By Fairy Hands their knell is rung,
By Forms unseen their Dirge is sung;
There Honour comes, a Pilgrim grey,
To bless the Turf that wraps their Clay,
And Freedom shall a-while repair,
To dwell a weeping Hermit there!

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CHRISTOPHER SMART

1722-1770

From Song to David

He sang of God—the mighty source
Of all things—the stupendous force
 On which all strength depends;
For whose right arm, beneath whose eyes,
All period, power, and enterprise
 Commences, reigns and ends.

The pillars of the Lord are seven,
Which stand from earth to topmost heaven;
 His wisdom drew the plan;
His word accomplish'd the design,
From brightest gem to deepest mine;
 From Christ enthroned, to Man.

For Adoration all the ranks
Of Angels yield eternal thanks,
 And David in the midst;
With God's good poor, which, last and least
In man's esteem, Thou to Thy feast,
 O blessed Bridegroom, bidd'st!

For Adoration, David's Psalms
Lift up the heart to deeds of alms;
And he, who kneels and chants,
Prevails his passions to control,
Finds meat and medicine to the soul,
Which for translation pants.

For Adoration, in the dome
Of Christ, the sparrows find a home,
And on His olives perch:
The swallow also dwells with thee,
O man of God's humility,
Within his Saviour's church.

Sweet is the dew that falls betimes,
And drops upon the leafy limes;
Sweet, Hermon's fragrant air:
Sweet is the lily's silver bell,
And sweet the wakeful tapers' smell
That watch for early prayer.

Sweet the young nurse, with love intense,
Which smiles o'er sleeping innocence;
Sweet when the lost arrive;
Sweet the musician's ardour beats,
While his vague mind's in quest of sweets,
The choicest flowers to hive.

Strong is the horse upon his speed;
Strong in pursuit the rapid glede,
Which makes at once his game:
Strong the tall ostrich on the ground;
Strong through the turbulent profound
Shoots Xiphias to his aim.

glede] kite;
Xiphias] sword-fish.

Strong is the lion—like a coal
His eyeball,—like a bastion's mole
His chest against the foes:
Strong the gier-eagle on his sail;
Strong against tide th' enormous whale
Emerges as he goes.

But stronger still, in earth and air,
And in the sea, the man of prayer,
And far beneath the tide:
And in the seat to faith assign'd,
Where ask is have, where seek is find,
Where knock is open wide.

Precious the penitential tear;
And precious is the sigh sincere,
Acceptable to God:
And precious are the winning flowers
In gladsome Israel's feast of bowers
Bound on the hallow'd sod.

Glorious the sun in mid career;
Glorious th' assembled fires appear;
Glorious the comet's train:
Glorious the trumpet and alarm;
Glorious the Almighty's stretch'd-out arm;
Glorious th' enraptured main:

Glorious the northern lights astream;
Glorious the song, when God's the theme;
Glorious the thunder's roar:
Glorious Hosanna from the den;
Glorious the catholic Amen;
Glorious the martyr's gore;

Glorious—more glorious—is the crown
 Of Him that brought salvation down,
 By meekness call'd thy Son·
 Thou that stupendous truth believed;—
 And now the matchless deed's achieved,
 Determined, dared, and done!

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OLIVER GOLDSMITH

1730?–1774

A Mock Epitaph

HERE lies David Garrick, describe him who can,
 An abridgement of all that was pleasant in man;
 As an actor confest without rival to shine,
 As a wit, if not first, in the very first line,
 Yet with talents like these, and an excellent heart,
 The man had his failings—a dupe to his art;
 Like an ill-judging beauty, his colours he spread,
 And be-plastered, with rouge, his own natural red.
 On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting,
 'Twas only that, when he was off, he was acting:
 With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
 He turn'd and he varied full ten times a day;
 Tho' secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick
 If they were not his own by finessing and trick;
 He cast off his friends, as a huntsman his pack,
 For he knew when he pleas'd he could whistle them back.

WILLIAM COWPER

1731-1800

From *Truth*

YON cottager, who weaves at her own door,
 Pillow and bobbins all her little store,
 Content, though mean; and cheerful, if not gay;
 Shuffling her threads about the live-long day,
 Just earns a scanty pittance; and at night
 Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light:
 She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,
 Has little understanding, and no wit,
 Receives no praise; but, though her lot be such,
 (Toilsome and indigent) she renders much;
 Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
 A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
 And in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,
 Her title to a treasure in the skies.

O happy peasant! O unhappy bard!
 His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward;
 He prais'd, perhaps, for ages yet to come;
 She never heard of half a mile from home:
 He, lost in errors, his vain heart prefers;
 She, safe in the simplicity of hers.

Not many wise, rich, noble, or profound
 In science, win one inch of heav'nly ground.
 And is it not a mortifying thought
 The poor should gain it, and the rich should not?

The Contrite Heart

THE Lord will happiness divine
 On contrite hearts bestow:
 Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
 A contrite heart, or no?

I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
 Insensible as steel,
 If ought is felt, 'tis only pain
 To find I cannot feel.

I sometimes think myself inclin'd
 To love Thee, if I could:
 But often feel another mind,
 Averse to all that's good.

My best desires are faint and few,
 I fain would strive for more:
 But when I cry "My strength renew",
 Seem weaker than before.

Thy saints are comforted, I know,
 And love Thy house of pray'r:
 I therefore go where others go,
 But find no comfort there.

O make this heart rejoice, or ache:
 Decide this doubt for me;
 And if it be not broken, break
 And heal it, if it be.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770-1850

*Ode on Intimations of Immortality from
Recollections of Early Childhood*

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
 The earth, and every common sight,
 To me did seem
 Apparell'd in celestial light,
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.
 It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
 Turn whereso'er I may,
 By night or day,
 The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

 The rainbow comes and goes,
 And lovely is the rose;
 The moon doth with delight
 Look round her when the heavens are bare;
 Waters on a starry night
 Are beautiful and fair;
 The sunshine is a glorious birth;
 But yet I know, where'er I go,
 That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
 And while the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound,
 To me alone there came a thought of grief:
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
 And I again am strong:

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling,
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have look'd upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar:
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farthest from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate, Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
 A six years' darling of a pigmy size!
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
 With light upon him from his father's eyes!
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,

Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnéd art;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
 Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
 But it will not be long
 Ere this be thrown aside,
 And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
 Mighty prophet! Seer blest!
 On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
 To whom the grave
Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
 Of day or the warm light,
A place of thought where we in waiting lie;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—

Not for these I raise

The song of thanks and praise;

But for those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings;

Blank misgivings of a Creature

Moving about in worlds not realized,

High instincts, before which our mortal Nature

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:

But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,

Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make

Our noisy years seem moments in the being

Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,

To perish never:

With neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,

Nor Man nor Boy,

Nor all that is at enmity with joy,

Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquish'd one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,

With it Camoens sooth'd an exile's grief;
 The Sonnet glitter'd a gay myrtle leaf
 Amid the cypress with which Dante crown'd
 His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,
 It cheer'd mild Spenser, call'd from Faery-land
 To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
 Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
 The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
 Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

278

SURPRISED by joy—impatient as the Wind—
 I turned to share the transport—O! with whom
 But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
 That spot which no vicissitude can find?
 Love, faithful love, recall'd thee to my mind—
 But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
 Even for the least division of an hour,
 Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
 To my most grievous loss?—That thought's return
 Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
 Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
 Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
 That neither present time, nor years unborn
 Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

279

The River Duddon: Afterthought

I THOUGHT of Thee, my partner and my guide,
 As being past away.—Vain sympathies!
 For backward, Duddon, as I cast my eyes,
 I see what was, what is, and will abide;
 Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide;

The Form remains, the function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty and the wise
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

280

Composed upon Westminster Bridge

Sept. 3, 1802

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

THE world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
 The sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
 It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLBRIDGE

1774-1834

Epitaph

STOP, Christian passer-by!—Stop, child of God,
 And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
 A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.
 O, lift one thought in prayer for S.T.C.;
 That he who many a year with toil of breath
 Found death in life, may here find life in death!
 Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame
 He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same.

GEORGE GORDON BYRON, LORD BYRON

1788—1824

The Isles of Greece

THE isles of Greece! the isles of Greece
 Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
 Where grew the arts of war and peace,
 Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
 Eternal summer gilds them yet,
 But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,
 The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
 Have found the fame your shores refuse:
 Their place of birth alone is mute
 To sounds which echo further west
 Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest."

The mountains look on Marathon—
 And Marathon looks on the sea;
 And musing there an hour alone,
 I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
 For standing on the Persians' grave,
 I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow
 Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
 And ships, by thousands, lay below,
 And men in nations;—all were his!
 He counted them at break of day—
 And when the sun set, where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divinc,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

284

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

1775-1864

FROM you, Ianthe, little troubles pass
Like little ripples down a sunny river;
Your pleasures spring like daisies in the grass,
Cut down, and up again as blithe as ever.

285

Dirce

STAND close around, ye Stygian set,
With Dirce in one boat conveyed,
Or Charon, seeing, may forget
That he is old and she a shade.

286

IRELAND never was contented.
Say you so? You are demented.
Ireland was contented when
All could use the sword and pen,
And when Tara rose so high
That her turrets split the sky,
And about her courts were seen
Liveried angels robed in green,
Wearing, by St. Patrick's bounty,
Emeralds big as half the county.

On his 75th birthday

I STROVE with none; for none was worth my strife.
 Nature I loved and, next to Nature, Art;
 I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
 It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

JOHN CLARE

1793-1864

Young Lambs

THE spring is coming by a many signs;
 The trays are up, the hedges broken down,
 That fenced the haystack, and the remnant shines
 Like some old antique fragment weathered brown.
 And where suns peep, in every sheltered place,
 The little early buttercups unfold
 A glittering star or two—till many trace
 The edges of the blackthorn clumps in gold.
 And then a little lamb bolts up behind
 The hill and wags his tail to meet the yoc,
 And then another, sheltered from the wind,
 Lies all his length as dead—and lets me go
 Close bye and never stirs but baking lies,
 With legs stretched out as though he could not rise.

Stonepit

THE passing traveller with wonder sees
 A deep and ancient stonepit full of trees;
 So deep and very deep the place has been,
 The church might stand within and not be seen.
 The passing stranger oft with wonder stops,
 And thinks he e'en could walk upon their tops,
 And often stoops to see the busy crow,
 And stands above and sees the eggs below;
 And while the wild horse gives its head a toss,
 The squirrel dances up and runs across.
 The boy that stands and kills the black-nosed bee
 Dares down as soon as magpies' nests are found,
 And wonders when he climbs the highest tree
 To find it reaches scarce above the ground.

290

HIS could not die when trees were green,
 For he loved the time too well.
 His little hands, when flowers were seen,
 Were held for the bluebell,
 As he was carried o'er the green.

His eye glanced at the white-nosed bee;
 He knew those children of the spring;
 When he was well and on the lea
 He held one in his hands to sing,
 Which filled his heart with glee.

Infants, the children of the Spring!
How can an infant die
When butterflies are on the wing,
Green grass, and such a sky?
How can they die at Spring?

He held his hands for daisies white,
And then for violets blue,
And took them all to bed at night
That in the green fields grew,
As childhood's sweet delight.

And then he shut his little eyes,
And flowers would notice not;
Birds' nests and eggs caused no surprise,
He now no blossoms got:
They met with plaintive sighs.

When Winter came and blasts did sigh,
And bare were plain and tree,
As he for ease in bed did lie
His soul seemed with the free,
He died so quietly.

291

Autumn

I LOVE the fitful gust that shakes
The casement all the day,
And from the glossy elm tree takes
The faded leaves away,
Twirling them by the window pane
With thousand others down the lane.

I love to see the shaking twig
Dance till the shut of eve,
The sparrow on the cottage rig,
Whose chirp would make believe
That Spring was just now flirting by
In Summer's lap with flowers to lie.

I love to see the cottage smoke
Curl upwards through the trees,
The pigeons nestled round the cote
On November days like these;
The cock upon the dunghill crowing,
The mill sails on the heath a-going.

The feather from the raven's breast
Falls on the stubble lea,
The acorns near the old crow's nest
Drop pattering down the tree;
The grunting pigs, that wait for all,
Scramble and hurry where they fall.

292

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

From Sleep and Poetry

STOP and consider! Life is but a day;
A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;

The reading of an ever-changing tale; }
 The light uplifting of a maiden's veil; }
 A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
 A laughing schoolboy, without grief or care,
 Riding the springy branches of an elm. . .

293

From *Endymion*

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever: }
 Its loveliness increases; it will never }
 Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
 Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darken'd ways
 Made for our searching; yes, in spite of all
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
 From our dark spirits . . .

294

Ode to a Nightingale

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,
That thou, light-wingéd Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvéd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South!
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainéd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:

Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalm'd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a muséd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

295

From Ode on a Grecian Urn

THOU still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair! . . .

296

Ode to Autumn

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the mossed cottage trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers;

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river salallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

297

Last Sonnet

BRIGHT Star, would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite;
The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

1792-1822

The Victory of Prometheus

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
 To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
 To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
 To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
 From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
 Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
 This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
 Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
 This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.

Ode to the West Wind

I

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
 Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
 Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
 Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou
 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
 Each like a corpse within its grave, until
 Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill;

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning! there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst: O hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: O hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! if even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then; when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision—I would ne'er have striven

(As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
O! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
< I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own?
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth;
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

300

From *Adonais*

... PEACE, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain

He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of that loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air . .

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!

301

GEORGE DARLEY

1795-1846

The Phoenix' Nest

O BLEST unfabled Incense Tree,
That burns in glorious Araby,
With red scent chalicing the air,
Till earth-life grow Elysian there!

Half-buried to her flaming breast
In this bright tree, she makes her nest,
Hundred-sunned Phoenix! when she must
Crumble at length to hoary dust!

Her gorgeous death-bed! her rich pyre
Burnt up with aromatic fire!
Her urn, sight high from spoiler men!
Her birthplace when self-born again!

The mountainless green wilds among,
Here ends she her unechoing song!
With amber tears and odorous sighs
Mourned by the desert where she dies!

O, fast her amber blood doth flow
From the heart-wounded Incense Tree,
Fast as earth's deep-embosomed woe
In silent rivulets to the sea!

Beauty may weep her fair first-born,
Perchance in as resplendent tears,
Such golden dewdrops bow like corn
When the stern sickleman appears.

302

THOMAS HOOD

1799-1845

THERE is a silence where hath been no sound,
There is a silence where no sound may be,
In the cold grave, under the deep, deep sea,
Or in wide desert where no life is found,
Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound:
No voice is hushed—no life treads silently,
But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,
That never spoke, over the idle ground:
But in green ruins, in the desolate walls
Of antique palaces, where Man hath been,
Though the dun fox, or wild hyaena, calls,
And owls, that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,
There the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

1806-1861

From Sonnets from the Portuguese

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
 Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
 Alone upon the threshold of my door
 Of individual life, I shall command
 The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
 Serenely in the sunshine as before,
 Without the sense of that which I forbore, . . .
 Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
 Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
 With pulses that beat double. What I do
 And what I dream include thee, as the wine
 Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
 God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
 And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of every day's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

ALFRED TENNYSON, LORD TENNYSON

1809-1892

Song of the Lotos-Eaters

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
 Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
 Here are cool mosses deep,
 And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
 While all things else have rest from weariness?
 All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
 We only toil, who are the first of things,
 And make perpetual moan,
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
 Nor ever fold our wings
 And cease from wanderings,
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
 Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
 'There is no joy but calm!'—
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
 The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
 With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,

Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;

To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His water from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twinèd vine—
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling

Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak.
The Lotos blows by every winding creek
All day the wind breathes low with mellow tone.
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is
blown
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was seeth-
ing free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-mountains in
the sea
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world.
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery
sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying
hands
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in
hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.

Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
O rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

306

To Virgil

(Written at the request of the Mantuans for the Nineteenth Centenary
of Virgil's death)

ROMAN Virgil, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre.

Landscape-lover, lord of language,
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word.

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless-sea;

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;

Light among the vanish'd ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise no more;

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Caesar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm,
sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
sunder'd once from all the human race,

I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

307

Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington

BURY the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation,
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the past.
No more in soldier fashion will he greet
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,
Our greatest yet with least pretence,
Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.
O good grey head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fall'n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!
Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

All is over and done:
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 England, for thy son
 Let the bell be toll'd.
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 And render him to the mould.
 Under the cross of gold
 That shines over city and river,
 There he shall rest for ever
 Among the wise and the bold.
 Let the bell be toll'd:
 And a reverent people behold
 The towering car, the sable steeds:
 Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,
 Dark in its funeral fold.
 Let the bell be toll'd:
 And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd;
 And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd
 Thro' the dome of the golden cross;
 And the volleying cannon thunder his loss;
He knew their voices of old.
 For many a time in many a clime
 His captain's car has heard them boom
 Bellowing victory, bellowing doom:
 When he with those deep voices wrought,
 Guarding realms and kings from shame;
 With those deep voices our dead captain taught
 The tyrant, and asserts his claim
 In that dread sound to the great name,
 Which he has worn so pure of blame,
 In praise and in dispraise the same,
 A man of well-attemper'd frame.
 O civic muse, to such a name,
 To such a name for ages long,
 To such a name
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,
 And ever-echoing avenues of song. . . .

From *In Memoriam*

CALM is the morn without a sound,
 Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
 And only thro' the faded leaf
 The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
 And on these dews that drench the furze,
 And all the silvery gossamers
 That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
 That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
 And crowded farms and lessening towers,
 To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
 These leaves that redden to the fall;
 And in my heart, if calm at all,
 If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
 And waves that sway themselves in rest,
 And dead calm in that noble breast
 Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

* * * * *

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
 Or breaking into song by fits,
 Alone, alone, to where he sits,
 The Shadow cloak'd from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
 I wander, often falling lame,
 And looking back to whence I came,
 Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it ran
Thro' lands where not a leaf was dumb;
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan:

When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
And all was good that Time could bring,
And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang,
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.

* * * * *

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down;
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sunflower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of fern and crake;
Or into silver arrows break
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

ROBERT BROWNING

1812-1889

THUS the Mayne glideth
 Where my Love abideth;
 Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
 On through lawns, on through meads,
 On and on, whate'er befall,
 Meandering and musical,
 Though the niggard pasturage
 Bears not on its shaven edge
 Aught but weeds and waving grasses
 To view the river as it passes,
 Save here and there a scanty patch
 Of primroses too faint to catch
 A weary bee . . . And scarce it pushes
 Its gentle way through straggling rushes
 Where the glossy king-fisher
 Flutters when noon-heats are near,
 Glad the shelving banks to shun,
 Red and steaming in the sun,
 Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
 Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
 Where the quick sandpipers flit
 In and out the marl and wet
 That seems to breed them, brown as they:
 Naught disturbs its quiet way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1822-1888

Dover Beach

THE sea is calm to-night.
 The tide is full, the moon lies fair
 Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
 Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
 Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
 Only, from the long line of spray
 Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
 Listen! you hear the grating roar
 Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
 At their return, up the high strand,
 Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
 With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
 The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
 Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
 Of human misery; we
 Find also in the sound a thought,
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
 But now I only hear
 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
 Retreating to the breath
 Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
 And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

311

From *Thyrsis*

... So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the next garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze.
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not! light-comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,
And we shall have him in the sweet spring days
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And bluebells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see. . . .

312

Shakespeare

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at.—Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

313

Requiescat

STREW on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes:
Ah! would that I did too.

Her mirth the world required;
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound;
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath;
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

314

COVENTRY PATMORE

1823-1896

Woman

A WOMAN is a foreign land,
Of which, though there he settle young,
A man will ne'er quite understand
The customs, politics and tongue,
The foolish hie them post-haste thro',
See fashions odd and prospects fair,
Learn of the language *How d'ye do?*
And go and brag they have been there.
The most for leave to trade apply
For once at Empire's seat, her heart,
Then get what knowledge ear and eye
Glean chancewise in the life-long mart.
And certain others, few and fit,
Attach them to the Court and see
The Country's best, its accent hit,
And partly sound its Polity.

GEORGE MEREDITH

1828-1909

From *The Lark Ascending*

. . . FOR singing till his heaven fills,
 'Tis love of earth that he instils,
 And ever winging up and up,
 Our valley is his golden cup,
 And he the wine which overflows
 To lift us with him as he goes:
 The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine,
 He is, the hills, the human line,
 The meadows green, the fallows brown,
 The dreams of labour in the town;
 He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
 The wedding song of sun and rains
 He is, the dance of children, thanks
 Of sowers, shout of primrose banks
 And eye of violets while they breathe;
 All these the circling song will wreath,
 And you shall hear the herb and tree,
 The better heart of men shall see,
 Shall feel celestially, as long
 As you crave nothing save the song.
 Was never voice of ours could say
 Our inmost in the sweetest way,
 Like yonder voice aloft, and link
 All hearers in the song they drink.
 Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
 Our passion is too full in flood,
 We want the key of his wild note
 Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
 The song seraphically free
 Of taint of personality,

So pure that it salutes the suns,
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice. . . .

316

THEY have no song, the sedges dry,
And still they sing.
It is within my breast they sing,
As I pass by.
Within my breast they touch a string,
They wake a sigh.
There is but sound of sedges dry;
In me they sing.

317

From *The Orchard and the Heath*

I CHANCED upon an early walk to spy
A troop of children through an orchard gate:
The boughs hung low, the grass was high;
They had but to lift hands or wait
For fruits to fill them; fruits were all their sky.

They shouted, running on from tree to tree,
And played the game the wind plays, on and round.
'Twas visible invisible glee
Pursuing; and a fountain's sound
Of laughter spouted, pattering fresh on me . . .

Dirge in Woods

A WIND sways the pines,
 And below
 Not a breath of wild air;
 Still as the mosses that glow
 On the flooring and over the lines
 Of the roots here and there.
 The pine-tree drops its dead;
 They are quiet, as under the sea.
 Overhead, overhead
 Rushes life in a race,
 As the clouds the clouds chase;
 And we go,
 And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
 Even we,
 Even so.

Lucifer in Starlight

ON a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
 Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
 Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
 Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
 Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
 And now upon his western wing he leaned,
 Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
 Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
 Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
 With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
 He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
 Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
 Around the ancient track marched rank on rank
 The army of unalterable law.

JAMES THOMSON

1834-1882

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry

WEARY of erring in this Desert Life,
 Weary of hoping hopes for ever vain,
 Weary of struggling in all-sterile strife,
 Weary of thought which maketh nothing plain,
 I close my eyes and calm my panting breath,
 And pray to Thee, O ever-quiet Death!
 To come and soothe away my bitter pain.

The strong still strive,—may they be victors crowned;
 The wise still seek,—may they at length find truth;
 The young still hope,—may purest love be found
 To make their age more glorious than their youth.
 For me, my brain is weak, my heart is cold . . .
 My hope and faith long dead; my life but bold
 In jest and laugh to parry hateful ruth.

Over me pass the days and months and years
 Like squadrons and battalions of the foe
 Trampling with thoughtless thrusts and alien jeers
 Over a wounded soldier lying low:
 He grips his teeth, or flings them words of scorn
 To mar their triumph: but the while, outworn,
 Inwardly craves for death to end his woe.

Our Mother feedeth thus our little life,
 That we in turn may feed her with our death:
 The great Sea sways, one interwoven strife,
 Wherefrom the sun exhales a subtle breath,
 To float the heavens sublime in form and hue,
 Then turning dark and cold in order due
 Rain weeping back to swell the Sea beneath,

One part of me shall feed a little worm,
And it a bird on which a man may feed;
One lime the mould, one nourish insect-sperm;
One thrill sweet grass, one pulse in bitter weed;
This swell a fruit, and that evolve in air;
Another trickle to a springlet's lair,
Another paint a daisy on a mead.

With cosmic interchange of parts for all,
Through all the modes of being numberless
Of every element, as may befall.
And if earth's general soul hath consciousness,
Their new life must with strange new joy be thrilled,
Of perfect law all perfectly fulfilled;
No sin, no fear, no failure, no excess.

Weary of living isolated life,
Weary of hoping hopes for ever vain,
Weary of struggling in all-sterile strife,
Weary of thought which maketh nothing plain,
I close my eyes and hush my panting breath,
And yearn for Thee, divinely tranquil Death,
To come and soothe away my bitter pain.

321

WILLIAM MORRIS

1834-1896

Inscription for a Bed at Kelmscott Manor

THE wind's on the wold
And the night is a-cold,
And Thames runs chill
'Twixt mead and hill.

319

But kind and dear
 Is the old house here,
 And my heart's warm
 'Midst winter's harm.
 Rest then and rest,
 And think of the best
 'Twixt summer and spring
 When all birds sing
 In the town of the tree,
 And ye lie in me,
 And scarce dare move,
 Lest the earth and its love
 Should fade away
 Ere the full of day.
 I am old and have seen
 Many things that have been;
 Both grief and peace
 And wane and increase.
 No tale I tell
 Of ill or well,
 But this I say:
 Night treadeth on day,
 And for worst or best
 Right good is rest.

322

PRAY but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips;
 Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
 The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,
 Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt the cloud
 bars,
 That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
 Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
 Waits to float through them along with the sun.

Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The heavy clms wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
They pray the long gloom through for daylight new born,
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

323

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

1837-1909

August

THERE were four apples on the bough,
Half gold half red, that one might know
The blood was ripe inside the core;
The colour of the leaves was more
Like stems of yellow corn that grow
Through all the gold June meadow's floor.

The warm smell of the fruit was good
To feed on, and the split green wood,
With all its bearded lips and stains
Of mosses in the cloven veins,
Most pleasant, if one lay or stood
In sunshine or in happy rains.

There were four apples on the tree,
Red stained through gold, that all might see
The sun went warm from core to rind;
The green leaves made the summer blind
In that soft place they kept for me
With golden apples shut behind.

The leaves caught gold across the sun,
And where the bluest air begun
Thirsted for song to help the heat;
As I to feel my lady's feet
Draw close before the day were done;
Both lips grew dry with dreams of it.

In the mute August afternoon
They trembled to some undertune
Of music in the silver air;
Great pleasure was it to be there
Till green turned duskier and the moon
Coloured the corn-sheaves like gold hair.

That August time it was delight
To watch the red moons wane to white
'Twixt grey seamed stems of apple-trees;
A sense of heavy harmonies
Grew on the growth of patient night,
More sweet than shapen music is.

But some three hours before the moon
The air, still eager from the noon,
Flagged after heat, not wholly dead;
Against the stem I leant my head;
The colour soothed me like a tune,
Green leaves all round the gold and red.

I lay there till the warm smell grew
More sharp, when flecks of yellow dew
Between the round ripe leaves had blurred
The rind with stain and wet; I heard
A wind that blew and breathed and blew,
Too weak to alter its one word.

The wet leaves next the gentle fruit
Felt smoother, and the brown tree-root
Felt the mould warmer: I too felt
(As water feels the slow gold melt
Right through it when the days burns mute)
The peace of time wherein love dwelt.

There were four apples on the tree,
Gold stained on red that all might see
The sweet blood filled them to the core:
The colour of her hair is more
Like stems of fair faint gold, that be
Mown from the harvest's middle floor.

324

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

1849-1903

A LATE lark twitters from the quiet skies:
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, grey city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!
My task accomplish'd and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gather'd to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850-1894

Wishes

Go, little book, and wish to all
Flowers in the garden, meat in the hall,
A bin of wine, a spice of wit,
A house with lawns enclosing it,
A living river by the door,
A nightingale in the sycamore.

IV

THROUGH THE WASTE LAND

'We stand too near the moderns to judge surely. They are of our period, and our prejudices, for or against, are too strong for the most perfect taste not to go astray. The new poets must run the gauntlet of the centuries before their place is assured. . . .'

SIR ALGERNON METHUEN

Shakespeare to Hardy

MODERN poetry has not yet run more than sixty years or so, even setting back the clock of the Twentieth Century to take in the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins. And apart from all the dust and heat of controversy, much has been achieved.

Admittedly, the scope is not wide. With the notable exception of Masfield's narrative poems, poetry and poetic experiment have been largely confined to the lyric of individual mood and feeling, enlarged to include much that is not a record of "recognised poetic experience". It has been the definite aim and achievement of many poets to add to the resources of poetry. You can see new beginnings in the breaking of the mould of even so fixed a form as the Sonnet; in the coining of new language; in the forging of new style, hard, clear and concentrated, or "obscure" in something the same way as Donne and the Metaphysical poets were considered obscure when they sought to employ the jargon and symbolism of "modern" knowledge and to stir the emotion by first stimulating thought.

Beyond question, Yeats and Bridges have upheld in a few poems the great tradition of love poetry, and the tradition of Christian poetry, which seemed in eclipse, has now passed into the keeping of T. S. Eliot. "He himself, from his present point of view", wrote Robert Lynd, "would probably regard *The Waste Land* as an utterance from the dark night of the soul." There has been some pre-occupation with song and stage-lyric. Housman's poems take the shape commonly associated with words for music, but he is known to have disliked the settings of *A Shropshire Lad* and wrote, in the fine phrase of Yeats, "with an ear attentive to the claims of his own art". Yeats was deeply interested in ending the long divorce between music and poetry, and wrote *Words for Music Perhaps*; De la Mare remains the singer of the century.

Country poetry has continued in a delightful succession of poets ranging from Hardy through Davies, Drinkwater, Thomas, Blun-

den, V. Sackville-West, to Norman Nicholson. It would be as easy to name fifty pleasing animal poems written in these fifty years as it would be difficult in any other half-century, and, as Auden has said, "We do not want to read 'great' poetry all the time." There has been some good political poetry, scantily represented in this small selection, where so much has had to be left aside. Martyn Skinner has made a fine isolated attempt to revive the verse epistle beloved of the 18th century.

The poetry of war and its aftermath naturally bulks large, and the poets of the First and Second World Wars provide an interesting study in comparison and contrast.

*"Our unheroic generation
Anchored to earth and confident and hopeless
Of bloom this May as any wry-limbed cy press"*

has surely equalled the poet-soldiers who went with songs to the battle in 1914 and for the most part only met disillusionment later, if they lived. Balancing Rupert Brooke is Sidney Keyes. "The astonishing maturity of his mind," wrote Miss Sackville West, "the intense seriousness of his outlook, and his innate preoccupation with major things, suggest that here potentially was the war poet for whom England had been waiting."

I am sorry it is not possible to give selections in an Anthology from the poems of Dr. Edith Sitwell—her *Green Song* in particular—or a taste of the magnificent quality of Robert Bridges' *Testament of Beauty*, or (at present) Mr. T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. And yet, what matter? English lyrical poetry is inexhaustible. Bookshops and libraries have all its pleasures in store for you, and these are only a few signposts on the way to poetry.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

1844-1889

I REMEMBER a house where all were good
 To me, God knows, deserving no such thing:
 Comforting smell breathed at very entering,
 Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood.
 That cordial air made those kind people a hood
 All over, as a bevy of eggs the mothering wing
 Will, or mild nights the new morsels of Spring:
 Why, it seem'd of course; seem'd of right it should.

Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combes, vales:
 All the air things wear that make this house, this Wales,
 Only the inmate does not correspond:
 God, lover of souls, swaying considerate scales,
 Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,
 Being mighty a master, being a father and fond.

A Nun Takes the Veil

I HAVE desired to go
 Where springs not fail,
 To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail,
 And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
 Where no storms come,
 Where the green swell is in the heavens dumb
 And out of the swing of the sea.

The Leaden Echo

How to keep—is there any ány, is there none such, nowhere
 known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, láce, latch or
 catch or key to keep

Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty . . . from vanishing
 away?

Ó is there no frowning of these wrinkles, rankèd wrinkles deep,
 Dówn, no waving off of these most mournful messengers, still
 messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?

No `there's none, there's none, O no there's none,
 Nor can you long be, what you now are, called fair,
 Do what you may do, what, do what you may,
 And wisdom is early to despair:

Be beginning; since, no, nothing can be done
 To keep at bay

Age and age's evils, hoar hair,
 Ruck and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death's worst, winding
 sheets, tombs and worms and tumbling to decay;

So be beginning, be beginning to despair.

O there's none; no no no there's none:

Be beginning to despair, to despair,
 Despair, despair, despair, despair.

God's Grandeur

THE world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is smeared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

330

THOMAS HARDY

1840-1928

Heredity

I AM the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on,
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to times anon,
And leaping from place to place
Over oblivion.

The years-heired feature that can
In curve and voice and eye
Despise the human span
Of durance, that is I;
The eternal thing in man,
That heeds no call to die.

331

Afterwards

WHEN the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous
stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
"To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come
to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the
door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things?"

332

The Oxen

CHRISTMAS EVE, and twelve of the clock,
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

333

ROBERT BRIDGES

1844-1930

Nightingales

BEAUTIFUL must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams wherefrom
Ye learn your song:
Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long.

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs of May,
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

My delight and thy delight
Walking, like two angels white,
In the gardens of the night:

My desire and thy desire
Twining to a tongue of fire,
Leaping live, and laughing higher:
Thro' the everlasting strife
In the mystery of life.

Love, from whom the world begun,
Hath the secret of the sun.

Love can tell, and love alone,
Whence the million stars were strewn,
Why each atom knows its own,
How, in spite of woe and death,
Gay is life, and sweet is breath:

This he taught us, this we knew,
Happy in his science true,
Hand in hand as we stood
'Neath the shadows of the wood,
Heart to heart as we lay
In the dawning of the day.

WHEREFORE to-night so full of care,
My soul, revolving hopeless strife,
Pointing at hindrance, and the bare
Painful escapes of fitful life?

Shaping the doom that may befall
By precedent of terror past;

By love dishonoured, and the call
Of friendship slighted at the last?

By treasured names, the little store
That memory out of wreck could save
Of loving hearts, that gone before
Call their old comrade to the grave?

O soul, be patient: thou wilt find
A little matter mend all this;
Some strain of music to thy mind,
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.

Again shall pleasure overflow
Thy cup with sweetness, thou shalt taste
Nothing but sweetness, and shalt grow
Half sad for sweetness run to waste.

O happy life! I hear thee sing,
O rare delight of mortal stuff!
I praise my days for all they bring,
Yet are they only not enough.

336

From Ode to Music

MAN born of desire
Cometh out of the night,
A wandering spark of fire,
A lonely word of eternal thought
Echoing in chance and forgot.

I

He seeth the sun,
He calleth the stars by name,
He saluteth the flowers.—
Wonders of land and sea,
The mountain towers
Of ice and air

He seeth, and calleth them fair:

Then he hideth his face;—
Whence he came to pass away
Where all is forgot,
Unmade—lost for aye
With the things that are not.

2

He striveth to know,
To unravel the Mind
That veileth in horror:
He wills to adore.
In wisdom he walketh
And loveth his kind;
His labouring breath
Would keep evermore:

Then he hideth his face;—
Whence he came to pass away
Where all is forgot,
Unmade—lost for aye
With the things that are not

3

He dreameth of beauty,
He seeks to create
Fairer and fairer
To vanquish his Fate;
No hindrance he—
No curse will brook,
He maketh a law
No ill shall be:
Then he hideth his face;—
Whence he came to pass away
Where all is forgot,
Unmade—lost for aye
With the things that are not.

—

FRANCIS THOMPSON

1859-1907

Opening of "An Ode after Easter"

CAST wide the folding doorways of the East,
 For now is light increased!
 And the wind-besom'd chambers of the air,
 See they be garnish'd fair;
 And look the ways exhale some precious odours,
 And set ye all about wild-breathing spiec,
 Most fit for Paradise.
 Now is no time for sober gravity,
 Season enough has Nature to be wise;
 But now discinct, with raiment glittering free,
 Shake she the ringing rafters of the skies,
 With festal footing and bold joyance sweet,
 And let the earth be drunken and carouse!
 For lo, into her house
 Spring is come home with her world-wandering feet,
 And all things are made young with young desires;
 And all for her is light increased
 In yellow stars and yellow daffodils . . .

O WORLD invisible, we view thee,
 O world intangible, we touch thee,
 O world unknowable, we know thee,
 Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
 The eagle plunge to find the air—
 That we ask of the stars in motion
 If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars:—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry;—and upon thy sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

339

WILLIAM WATSON

1858-1935

At a Burial

LORD of all Light and Darkness,
Lord of all Life and Death,
Behold, we lay in earth today
The flesh that perisheth.
Take to Thyself whatever may
Be not as dust and breath—
Lord of all Light and Darkness,
Lord of all Life and Death.

ALICE MEYNELL

1847-1922

*A Dead Harvest**(In Kensington Gardens)*

ALONG the graceless grass of town
 They rake the rows of red and brown,—
 Dead leaves, unlike the rows of hay
 Delicate, touched with gold and grey,
 Raked long ago and far away.

A narrow silence in the park,
 Between the lights a narrow dark.
 One street rolls on the north; and one,
 Muffled, upon the south doth run;
 Amid the mist the work is done.

A futile crop!—for it the fire
 Smoulders, and, for a stack, a pyre.
 So go the town's lives on the breeze,
 Even as the sheddings of the trees;
 Bosom nor barn is filled with these.

Unto us a Son is given

GIVEN, not lent,
 And not withdrawn—once sent,
 This Infant of mankind, this One,
 Is still the little welcome Son.

New every year,
New born and newly dear,
He comes with tidings and a song,
The ages long, the ages long;

Even as the cold
Keen winter grows not old,
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
And spring in the familiar green.

Sudden as sweet
Come the expected feet.
All joy is young, and new all art,
And He, too, Whom we have by heart.

342

RUDYARD KIPLING

1865-1936

Two Epitaphs of War

The Sleepy Sentinel

FAITHLESS the watch I kept: now I have none to keep.
I was slain because I slept: now I am slain I sleep.
Let no man reproach me again, whatever watch is unkept—
I sleep because I am slain. They slew me because I slept.

Pelicans in the Wilderness

The blown sand heaps on me, that none may learn
Where I am laid for whom my children grieve . . .
O wings that beat at dawning, ye return
Out of the desert to your young at eve!

The Song o' Steam

(From *McAndrew's Hymn*)

*... Below there! Oiler! What's your wark? Ye find it runnin' hard?
 Ye needn't swill the cup wi' oil—this isn't the Cunard!
 Ye thought? Ye are not paid to think. Go, sweat that off again!
 Tck! Tck! It's deeficult to sweer nor tak' The Name in vain!
 Men, ay, an' women, call me stern. Wi' these to oversee,
 Ye'll note I've little time to burn on social repartee.
 The bairns see what their elders miss; they'll hunt me to an' fro,
 Till for the sake of—well, a kiss—I tak' 'em down below.
 That minds me of our Viscount loon—Sir Kenneth's kin—the
 chap
 Wi' Russia-leather tennis-shoon an' spar-decked yachtin' cap.
 I showed him round last week, o'er all—an' at the last says he:
 "Mister McAndrew, don't you think steam spoils romance at
 sea?"
 Damned ijjit! I'd been doon that morn to see what ailed the
 throws,
 Manholin', on my back—the cranks three inches off my nose.
 Romance! Those first-class passengers they like it very well,
 Printed and bound in little books; but why don't poets tell?
 I'm sick of all their quirks an' turns—the loves an' doves they
 dream—
 Lord, send a man like Robbie Burns to sing the Song o' Steam!
 To match wi' Scotia's noblest speech yon orchestra sublime
 Whaurto—uplifted like the Just—the tail-rods mark the time.
 The crank-throws give the double-bass, the feed-pump sobs an'
 heaves,
 An' now the main eccentrics start their quarrel on the sheaves:
 Her time, her own appointed time, the rocking link-head bides,
 Till—hear that note?—the rod's return whings glimmerin'
 through the guides.
 They're all awa'! True beat, full power, the clangin' chorus goes
 Clear to the tunnel where they sit, my purrin' dynamoses.*

Interdependence absolute, foreseen, ordained, decreed,
 To work, Ye'll note, at ony tilt an' every rate o' speed.
 Fra' skylight-lift to furnace-bars, backed, bolted, braced an'
 stayed,
 An' singin' like the Mornin' Stars for joy that they are made;
 While, out o' touch o' vanity, the sweatin' thrust-block says:
 "Not unto us the praise, or man—not unto us the praise!"
 Now, a' together, hear them lift their lesson—theirs an' mine:
 "Law, Orrder, Duty an' Restraint, Obedience, Discipline!"
 Mill, forge an' try-pit taught them that when roarin' they arose,
 An' whiles I wonder if a soul was gied them wi' the blows.
 Oh for a man to weld it then, in one trip-hammer strain,
 Till even first-class passengers could tell the meanin' plain!
 But no one cares except mysel' that serve an' understand
 My seven thousand horse-power here. Eh, Lord! They're grand
 —they're grand!
 Uplift am I? When first in store the new-made beasties stood,
 Were Ye cast down that breathed the Word declarin' all things
 good?
 Not so! O' that warld-liftin' joy no after-fall could vex,
 Ye've left a glimmer still to cheer the Man—the Arrtifex!
That holds, in spite o' knock and scale, o' friction, waste an' slip,
 An' by that light—now, mark my word—we'll build the Perfect
 Ship.
 I'll never last to judge her lines or take her curve—not I.
 But I ha' lived an' I ha' worked. Be thanks to Thee, Most High!
 An' I ha' done what I ha' done—judge Thou if ill or well—
 Always Thy Grace preventin' me . . .
 .Losh! Yon's the "Stand-by" bell.
 Pilot so soon? His flare it is. The mornin' watch is set.
 Well. God be thanked, as I was sayin', I'm no Pelagian yet. . .

THEY shut the road through the woods
 Seventy years ago.
 Weather and rain have undone it again,
 And now you would never know
 There was once a road through the woods
 Before they planted the trees.
 It is underneath the coppice and heath
 And the thin anemones.
 Only the keeper sees
 That, where the ring-dove broods,
 And the badgers roll at ease,
 There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods
 Of a summer evening late,
 When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
 Where the otter whistles his mate,
 (They fear not men in the woods,
 Because they see so few)
 You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
 And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
 Steadily cantering through
 The misty solitudes,
 As though they perfectly knew
 The old lost road through the woods . . .
 But there is no road through the woods.

EDWARD THOMAS

1878-1917

Thaw

OVER the land freckled with snow half-thawed
 The speculating rooks at their nests cawed
 And saw from elm-tops, delicate as flower of grass,
 What we below could not see, Winter pass.

Swedes

THEY have taken the gable from the roof of clay
 On the long swede pile. They have let in the sun
 To the white and gold and purple of curled fronds
 Unsunned. It is a sight more tender-gorgeous
 At the wood-corner where winter moans and drips
 Than when, in the Valley of the Tombs of Kings,
 A boy crawls down into a Pharaoh's tomb
 And, first of Christian men, beholds the mummy,
 God and monkey, chariot and throne and vase,
 Blue pottery, alabaster, and gold.

But dreamless, long-dead Amen-hotep lies.
 This is a dream of Winter, sweet as Spring.

Out in the Dark

OUT in the dark over the snow
 The fallow fawns invisible go
 With the fallow doe;
 And the winds blow
 Fast as the stars are slow.

Stealthily the dark haunts round
 And, when the lamp goes, without sound
 At a swifter bound
 Then the swiftest hound,
 Arrives, and all else is drowned;

And star and I and wind and deer,
 Are in the dark together,—near,
 Yet far,—and fear
 Drums on my ear
 In that sage company drear.

How weak and little is the light,
 All the universe of sight,
 Love and delight,
 Before the might,
 If you love it not, of night.

A. E. HOUSMAN

1859-1936

WITH rue my heart is laden
 For golden friends I had,
 For many a rose-lipt maiden
 And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

349

LOVELIEST of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom,
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

350

It is no gift I tender,
A loan is all I can;
But do not scorn the lender;
Man gets no more from man.

O mortal man may borrow
What mortal man can lend;
And 'twill not end tomorrow,
Though sure enough 'twill end.

If death and time are stronger,
A love may yet be strong;
The world will last for longer,
But this will last for long.

TARRY, delight, so seldom met,
 So sure to perish, tarry still;
 Forbear to cease or languish yet,
 Though soon you must and will.

By Sestos town, in Hero's tower,
 On Hero's heart Leander lies;
 The signal torch has burned its hour
 And sputters as it dies.

Beneath him, in the nighted firth,
 Between two continents complain
 The seas he swam from earth to earth
 And he must swim again.

HERE dead we lie because we did not choose
 To live and shame the land from which we sprung.
 Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose;
 But young men think it is, and we were young.

W. B. YEATS

1865-1939

The Folly of Being Comforted

ONE that is ever kind said yesterday:
 "Your well-beloved's hair has threads of grey,
 And little shadows come about her eyes;
 Time can but make it easier to be wise

Though now it seem impossible, and so
Patience is all that you have need of."

No,

I have not a crumb of comfort, not a grain,
Time can but make her beauty over again;
Because of that great nobleness of hers
The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs
Burns but more clearly. O she had not these ways
When all the wild summer was in her gaze.
O heart! O heart! if she'd but turn her head,
You'd know the folly of being comforted.

354

Aedh wishes for the Cloths of Heaven

HAD I had the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light;
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

355

Mad as the Mist and Snow

BOLT and bar the shutter,
For the foul winds blow:
Our minds are at their best this night,
And I seem to know
That everything outside us is
Mad as the mist and snow.

Horace there by Homer stands,
Plato stands below,
And here is Tully's open page.
How many years ago
Were you and I unlettered lads
Mad as the mist and snow?

You ask what makes me sigh, old friend,
What makes me shudder so?
I shudder and I sigh to think
That even Cicero
And many-minded Homer were
Mad as the mist and snow.

356

Lullaby

BELLOVED, may your sleep be sound
That have found it where you fed.
What were all the world's alarms
To mighty Paris when he found
Sleep upon a golden bed
That first dawn in Helen's arms?

Sleep, beloved, such a sleep
As did that wild Tristram know
When, the potion's work being done,
Roe could run or doe could leap,
Under oak and beechen bough
Roe could leap or doe could run;

Such a sleep and sound as fell
Upon Eurotas' grassy bank
When the holy bird, that there
Accomplished his predestined will,
From the limbs of Leda sank
But not from her protecting care.

JOHN MASEFIELD

By a Bier-Side

MAN is a sacred city, built of marvellous earth.
 Life was lived nobly here to give this body birth.
 Something was in this brain and in this eager hand.
 Death is so dumb and blind, Death cannot understand.
 Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs' glory.
 Death makes women a dream and men a traveller's story,
 Death drives the lonely soul to wander under the sky,
 Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die.

C. L. M.

IN the dark womb where I began
 My mother's life made me a man.
 Through all the months of human birth
 Her beauty fed my common earth.
 I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,
 But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave
 She cannot see the life she gave.
 For all her love, she cannot tell
 Whether I use it ill or well,
 Nor knock at dusty doors to find
 Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,
She would not know her little son,
I am so grown. If we should meet
She would pass by me in the street,
Unless my soul's face let her see
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind
My debt to her and womankind?
What woman's happier life repays
Her for those months of wretched days?
For all my mouthless body leeches
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said
In thanks to that dear woman dead?
Men triumph over women still,
Men trample women's right at will,
And man's lust roves the world untamed.

* * * * *

O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

359

Twilight

TWILIGHT it is, and the far woods are dim, and the rooks cry and
call.

Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a star over all,
There by the rick, where they thresh, is the drone at an end,
Twilight it is, and I travel the road with my friend.

I think of the friends who are dead, who were dear long ago in the
past,
Beautiful friends who are dead, though I know that death cannot
last;
Friends with the beautiful eyes that the dust has defiled,
Beautiful souls who were gentle when I was a child.

W. H. DAVIES

1871-1940

The Beautiful

THREE things there are more beautiful
 Than any man could wish to see:
 The first, it is a full-rigged ship
 Sailing with all her sails set free;
 The second, when the wind and sun
 Are playing in a field of corn;
 The third, a woman, young and fair,
 Showing her child before it is born.

WHERE she is now, I cannot say—
 The world has many a place of light;
 Perhaps the sun's eyelashes dance
 On hers, to give them both delight.

Or does she sit in some green shade,
 And then the air that lies above
 Can with a hundred pale blue eyes
 Look through the leaves and find my love.

Perhaps she dreams of life with me,
 Her cheek upon her finger-tips;
 O that I could leap forward now,
 Behind her back and, with my lips,

Break through those curls above her nape,
 That hover close and lightly there;
 To prove if they are substance, or
 But shadows of her lovely hair.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

1884-1915

Brumana

Oh, shall I never, never be home again?
 Meadows of England shining in the rain
 Spread wide your daisied lawns: your ramparts green
 With briar fortify, with blossom screen
 Till my far morning—and O streams that slow
 And pure and deep through plains and playlands go,
 For me your love and all your kingcups storr,
 And—dark militia of the southern shore,
 Old fragrant friends—preserve me the last lines
 Of that long saga which you sang me, pines,
 When, lonely boy, beneath the chosen tree
 I listened, with my eyes upon the sea.

O traitor pines, you sang what life has found
 The falsest of fair tales.
 Earth blew a far-horn prelude all around,
 That native music of her forest home;
 While from the sea's blue fields and syren dales
 Shadows and light noon-spectres of the foam
 Riding the summer gales
 On aery viols plucked an idle sound.

Hearing you sing, O trees,
 Hearing your murmur, "There are older seas,
 That beat on vaster sands,
 Where the wise snailfish move their pearly towers
 To carven rocks and sculptured promont'ries,"
 Hearing you whisper, "Lands
 Where blaze the unimaginable flowers."

Beneath me in the valley waves the palm,
Beneath, beyond the valley, breaks the sea;
Beneath me sleep in mist and light and calm
Cities of Lebanon, dream-shadow-dim,
Where Kings of Tyre and Kings of Tyre did rule
In ancient days in endless dynasty;
And all around the snowy mountains swim
Like mighty swans afloat in heaven's pool.

But I will walk upon the wooded hill
Where stands a grove, O pines, of sister pines,
And when the downy twilight droops her wing
And no sea glimmers and no mountain shines,
My heart shall listen still.
For pines are gossip pines the wide world through
And full of runic tales to sigh or sing.
'Tis ever sweet through pines to see the sky
Blushing a deeper gold or darker blue.
'Tis ever sweet to lie
On the dry carpet of the needles brown,
And though the fanciful green lizard stir
And windy odours light as thistledown
Breathe from the lavdanon and lavender,
Half to forget the wandering and pain,
Half to remember days that have gone by,
And dream and dream that I am home again!

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SIEGFRIED SASSOON

At the Grave of Henry Vaughan

ABOVE the voiceful windings of a river
An old green slab of simply graven stone
Shuns notice, overshadowed by a yew.

Here Vaughan lies dead, whose name flows on for ever
Through pastures of the spirit washed with dew
And starlit with eternities unknown.

Here sleeps the Silurist; the loved physician;
The face that left no portraiture behind;
The skull that housed white angels and had vision
Of daybreak through the gateways of the mind.
Here faith and mercy, wisdom and humility
(Whose influence shall prevail for evermore)
Shine. And this lowly grave tells Heaven's tranquility.
And here stand I, a suppliant at the door.

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Ancient History

ADAM, a brown old vulture in the rain,
Shivered below his wind-whipped olive trees;
Huddling sharp chin on scarred and scraggy knees,
He moaned and mumbled to his darkening brain;
"He was the grandest of them all—was Cain!
"A lion laired in the hills, that none could tire:
"Swift as a stag: a stallion of the plain,
"Hungry and fierce with deeds of huge desire."

Grimly he thought of Abel, soft and fair—
A lover with disaster in his face,
And scarlet blossom twisted in bright hair.
"Afraid to fight; was murder more disgrace? . . .
"God always hated Cain" . . . He bowed his head—
The gaunt wild man whose lovely sons were dead.

RUPERT BROOKE

1887-1915

BREATHLESS, we flung us on the windy hill,
 Laughed in the sun, and kissed the lovely grass.
 You said, "Through glory and ecstasy we pass;
 Wind, sun, and earth remain, the birds sing still,
 When we are old, are old . . ." "And when we die
 All's over that is ours; and life burns on
 Through other lovers, other lips," said I,
 "Heart of my heart, our heaven is now, is won!"
 "We are earth's best, that learnt her lesson here.
 Life is our cry. We have kept the faith!" we said;
 "We shall go down with unreluctant tread
 Rose-crowned into the darkness!" . . . Proud we were,
 And laughed, that had such brave true things to say.
 —And then you suddenly cried, and turned away.

BLOW out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
 There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
 But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
 These laid the world away; poured out the red
 Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
 Of work and joy, and that unhopèd serene,
 That men call age; and those who would have been,
 Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
 Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
 Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
 And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
 And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
 And we have come into our heritage.

WILFRED OWEN

1893-1918

Strange Meeting

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groined,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."
"None," said the other, "save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
Or discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.

Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.
I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this death; for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now . . ."

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HAROLD MONRO

1879-1932

Living

Slow bleak awakening from the morning dream
Brings me in contact with the sudden day.
I am alive—this I.
I let my fingers move along my body.
Realisation warns them, and my nerves
Prepare their rapid messages and signals.
While Memory begins recording, coding,
Repeating; all the time Imagination
Mutters: You'll only die.

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Here's a new day. O Pendulum move slowly!
My usual clothes are waiting on their peg.
I am alive—this I.
And in a moment Habit, like a crane,
Will bow its neck and dip its pulleyed cable,
Gathering me, my body, and our garment,
And swing me forth, oblivious of my question,
Into the daylight—why?

I think of all the others who awaken,
And wonder if they go to meet the morning
More valiantly than I;
Nor asking of this day they will be living:
What have I done that I should be alive?
O, can I not forget that I am living?
How shall I reconcile the two conditions:
Living, and yet—to die?

Between the curtains the autumnal sunlight
With lean and yellow finger points me out;
The clock moans: Why? Why? Why?
But suddenly, as if without a reason,
Heart, Brain and Body, and Imagination
All gather in tumultuous joy together,
Running like children down the path of morning
To fields where they can play without a quarrel:
A country I'd forgotten, but remember,
And welcome with a cry.

A cool glad pasture; living tree, tall corn,
Great cliff, or languid sloping sand, cold sea,
Waves; rivers curving: you, eternal flowers,
Give me content, while I can think of you:
Give me your living breath!
Back to your rampart, Death.

The Quiet Mind

IN my small room
 I wonder, oh, how much I wonder how
 I, born, can think, and see, and feel, and hear
 Till my quiet mind does whisper to my ear
 I'm yours; you're mine. Be sure you're true to me.
 I'm joy, I'm life, friend and Eternity.

D. H. LAWRENCE

1886-1930

Song of a Man Who Has Come Through

Nor I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
 A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
 If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!
 If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a winged gift!
 If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
 By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos of
 ' the world

Like a fine, an exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted;
 If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge
 Driven by invisible blows,
 The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the
 Hesperides.

Oh, for the wonder that bubbles into my soul,
 I would be a good fountain, a good well-head,
 Would blur no whisper, spoil no expression.

What is the knocking?
What is the knocking at the door in the night?
It is somebody wants to do us harm.

No, no, it is the three strange angels.
Admit them, admit them.

371

JOHN DRINKWATER

1882-1937

LORD RAMESES of Egypt sighed
Because a summer evening passed;
And little Ariadne cried
That summer fancy fell at last
To dust; and young Verona died
When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
And little Ariadne sleep.

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Moonlit Apples

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those
Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches, and then
There is no sound at the top of the house of men
Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon again
Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy beams;
On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,
And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep,
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep
On moon-washed apples of wonder.

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LAURENCE BINYON

1869-1943

O WORLD, be nobler, for her sake!
If she but knew thee what thou art,
What wrongs are borne, what deeds are done
In thee, beneath thy daily sun,
Know'st thou not that her tender heart
For pain and very shame would break?
O World, be nobler, for her sake!

For the Fallen

WITH proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables at home:
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night.

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

HILAIRE BELLOC

LADY, when your lovely head
 Sinks to lie among the Dead,
 And the quiet Places keep
 You that so divinely sleep!
 Then the Dead shall blessed be
 With a New Solemnity.
 For such beauty so descending
 Pledges them that death is ending.
 Sleep your fill!—But when you wake
 Dawn shall over Lethe break.

RALPH HODGSON

From *The Song of Honour*

I CLIMBED a hill as light fell short
 And rooks came home in scramble sort,
 And filled the trees and flapped and fought
 And sang themselves to sleep;
 An owl from nowhere with no sound
 Swung by and soon was nowhere found,
 I heard him calling half-way round,
 Holloing loud and deep;
 A pair of stars, faint pins of light,
 Then many a star, sailed into sight,
 And all the stars, the flower of night,
 Were round me at a leap;
 To tell how still the valleys lay
 I heard a watchdog miles away,
 And bells of distant sheep.

I heard no more of bird or bell,
The mastiff in a slumber fell,
I stared into the sky,
As wondering men have always done
Since beauty and the stars were one
Though none so hard as I.

It seemed, so still the valleys were,
As if the whole world knelt at prayer,
Save me and me alone;
So pure and wide that silence was
I feared to bend a blade of grass,
And there I stood like stone.

There, sharp and sudden, there I heard—

*Ah! some wild lovesick singing bird
Woke singing in the trees?
The nightingale and babble-wren
Were in the English greenwood then,
And you heard one of these?*

The babble-wren and nightingale
Sang in the Abyssinian vale
That season of the year!
Yet, true enough, I heard them plain,
I heard them both again, again,
As sharp and sweet and clear
As if the Abyssinian tree
Had thrust a bough across the sea,
Had thrust a bough across to me
With music for my ear!

I heard them both, and oh! I heard
The song of every singing bird
That sings beneath the sky,
And with the song of lark and wren
The song of mountains, moths and men
And seas and rainbows vie!

I heard the universal choir,
The Sons of Light exalt their Sire
With universal song,
Earth's lowliest and loudest notes,
Her million times ten million throats
Exalt Him loud and long,
And lips and lungs and tongues of Grace
From every part and every place
Within the shining of His face,
The Universal throng.

I heard the hymn of being sound
From every well of honour found
In human sense and soul:
The song of poets when they write
The testament of Beautysprite
Upon a flying scroll,
The song of painters when they take
A burning brush for Beauty's sake
And limn her features whole—

The song of men divinely wise
Who look and see in starry skies
Not stars so much as robins' eyes,
And when these pale away
Hear flocks of shiny pleiades
Among the plums and apple trees
Sing in the summer day—

The song of all both high and low
To some blest vision true,
The song of beggars when they throw
The crust of pity all men owe
To hungry sparrows in the snow,
Old beggars hungry too—
The song of kings of kingdoms when
They rise above their fortune Men,
And crown themselves anew—

The song of men all sorts and kinds,
As many tempers, moods and minds
As leaves are on a tree,
As many faiths and castes and creeds,
As many human bloods and breeds
As in the world may be;
The song of each and all who gaze
On Beauty in her naked blaze,
Or see her dimly in a haze,
Or get her light in fitful rays
And tiniest needles even,
The song of all not wholly dark,
Not wholly sunk in stupor stark
Too deep for groping Heaven—

And alleluias sweet and clear
And wild with beauty men mishcar,
From choirs of song as near and dear
To Paradise as they,
The everlasting pipe and flute
Of wind and sea and bird and brute,
And lips deaf men imagine mute
In wood and stone and clay:

The music of a lion strong
That shakes a hill a whole night long,
A hill as loud as he,
The twitter of a mouse among
Melodious greenery,
The ruby's and the rainbow's song,
The nightingale's—all three,
The song of life that wells and flows
From every leopard, lark and rose
And everything that gleams or goes
Lack-lustre in the sea.

I heard it all, each, every note
Of every lung and tongue and throat,
Ay, every rhythm and rhyme
Of everything that lives and loves
And upward, ever upward moves
From lowly to sublime!

Earth's multitudinous Sons of Light,
I heard them lift their lyric might
With each and every chanting sprite
That lit the sky that wondrous night
As far as eye could climb?

I heard it all, I heard the whole
Harmonious hymn of being roll
Up through the chapel of my soul
And at the altar die,
And in the awful quiet then
Myself I heard, Amen, Amen,
Amen I heard me cry!
I heard it all and then although
I caught my flying senses, Oh,
A dizzy man was I!
I stood and stared; the sky was lit
The sky was stars all over it,
I stood, I knew not why,
Without a wish, without a will,
I stood upon that silent hill
And stared into the sky until
My eyes were blind with stars and still
I stared into the sky.

G. K. CHESTERTON

1872-1936

A Christmas Carol

THE Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

WALTER DE LA MARE

Fare Well

WHEN I lie where shades of darkness
 Shall no more assail mine eyes,
 Nor the rain make lamentation
 When the wind sighs;
 How will fare this world whose wonder
 Was the very proof of me?
 Memory fades, must the remembered
 Perishing be?

Oh, when this my dust surrenders
 Hand, foot, lip, to dust again,
 May these loved and loving faces
 Please other men!
 May the rusting harvest hedgerow
 Still the Traveller's Joy entwine,
 And as happy children gather
 Posies once mine.

Look thy last on all things lovely,
 Every hour. Let no night
 Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
 Till to delight
 Thou have paid thy utmost blessing;
 Since that all things thou wouldst praise
 Beauty took from those who loved them
 In other days.

Who?

1st Stranger: WHO walks with us on the hills?

2nd Stranger: I cannot see for the mist.

3rd Stranger: Running water I hear,
 Keeping lugubrious tryst
 With its cresses and grasses and weeds,
 In the white obscure light from the sky.

2nd Stranger: *Who walks with us on the hills?*

Wild Bird: Ay! . . . Aye! . . . Ay!

Napoleon

"WHAT is the world, O soldiers?

It is I:

I, this incessant snow,
 This northern sky;
 Soldiers, this solitude
 Through which we go
 Is I."

Rose

THREE centuries now are gone
 Since Thomas Campion
 Left men his airs, his verse, his heedful prose.
 Few other memories
 Have we of him, or his,
 And of his sister, none, but that her name was Rose.

Woodruff, far moschatel
May the more fragrant smell
When into brittle dust their blossoming goes.
His, too, a garden sweet,
Where rarest beauties meet,
And, as a child, he shared them with this Rose.

Faded, past changing, now,
Cheek, mouth, and childish brow.
Where, too, her phantom wanders no man knows.
Yet, when in undertone
That eager lute pines on,
Pleading of things he loved, it sings of Rose.

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Dreams

Be gentle, O hands of a child;
Be true: like a shadowy sea
In the starry darkness of night
Are your eyes to me.

But words are shallow, and soon
Dreams fade that the heart once knew;
And youth fades out in the mind,
In the dark eyes too.

What can a tired heart say,
Which the wise of the world have made dumb?
Save to the lonely dreams of a child,
"Return again, come!"

WILFRID GIBSON

Prometheus

ALL day beneath the bleak indifferent skies,
 Broken and blind, a shivering bag of bones,
 He trudges over icy paving-stones
 And *Matches! Matches! Matches! Matches!* cries.

And now beneath the dismal dripping night
 And shadowed by a deeper night he stands—
 And yet he holds within his palsied hands
 Quick fire enough to set his world alight.

HUMBERT WOLFE

1885-1940

Thrushes

THE City Financier
 walks in the gardens,
 stiffly, because of
 his pride and his burdens.

The daisies, looking
 up, observe
 only a self-
 respecting curve.

The thrushes only
see a flat
table-land
of shiny hat.

He looks importantly
about him,
while all the spring
goes on without him.

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Green Candles

"THERE's someone at the door," said gold candlestick:
"Let her in quick, let her in quick!"
"There is a small hand groping at the handle:
"Why don't you turn it?" asked green candle.

"Don't go, don't go," said the Heppelwhite chair,
"lest you find a strange lady there."
"Yes, stay where you are," whispered the white wall:
"there is nobody there at all."

"I know her little foot," grey carpet said:
"Who but I should know her light tread?"
"She shall come in," answered the open door,
"and not," said the room, "go out any more."

FRANCES CORNFORD

In the Backs

too many of the dead—some I knew well—
 have smelt this unforgotten river smell
 liquid and old and dank,
 and on the tree-dark, lacquered slowly-passing stream
 have seen the boats come softly as in dream
 past the green bank.
 O Camus, reverend Sire, came footing slow
 three hundred years ago;
 and Milton paced the avenue of trees
 a miracle of sun and shade as now,
 the dead, magnificent, unborn cadences
 behind his youthful brow.

Milton and Chaucer, Herbert, Herrick, Gray,
 Rupert, and you forgotten others, say:
 are there slow rivers and bridges where you have gone away?
 That new absorption have your spirits found,
 That wider lot?
 Some day in Spring do you come back at will
 and tread with weightless feet the ancient ground?
 O say, if not,
 Why is this air so sacred and so still?

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

Winter Song

MANY have sung the summer's songs,
 Many have sung the corn,
 Many have sung white blossom too
 That stars the naked thorn—
 That stars the black and naked thorn
 Against the chalky blue.

But I, crouched up beside the hearth,
 Will sing the red and gray;
 Red going-down of sun behind
 Clubbed woods of winter's day;
 Of winter's short and hoddan day
 That seals the sober hind:

Seals him sagacious through the year
 Since winter comes again:
 Since harvest's but another toil
 And sorrow through the grain
 Mounts up, through swathes of ripest grain
 The sorrow of the soil.

No lightness is there at their heart,
 No joy in country folk;
 Only a patience slow and grave
 Beneath their labour's yoke,—
 Beneath the earth's compelling yoke
 That only serves its slave,

Since countryman for ever holds
The winter's memory,
When he, before the planets' fires
Have faded from the sky,
From black, resplendent winter sky
Must go about his byres;

And whether to the reaper's whirr
That scythes the falling crops,
He travels round the widening wake
Between the corn and copse,
The stubble wake 'twixt corn and copse
Where gleaners ply the rake,

Or whether in his granary loft
He pours the winnowed sacks,
Or whether in his yard he routs
The vermin from the stacks,
The vermin from the staddled stacks
With staves and stones and shouts,

Still, still through all the molten eves
Whether he reaps or hones,
Or counts the guerdon of his sweat,
Still to his inward bones,
His ancient, sage, sardonic bones,
The winter haunts him yet.

Winter and toil reward him still
While he his course shall go
According to his proven worth,
Until his faith shall know
The ultimate justice, and the slow
Compassion of the earth.

LILIAN BOWES LYON

A Shepherd's Coat

I ~~woke~~ from death and dreaming.
 His absence be the child I carry,
 All days, and all years.
 Eternally and this night he will deliver me.
 Come peace. For he is coming.

Time tells a marginal story;
 Dilates with midsummer that less than leaf
 A mute heart, light heart, blown along the pavement;
 Then mortally wintry, sears
 The implicit glade—oh universe enough!
 Orchard in bloom bereaved beyond bereavement.
 Yet peace! For now it is gloaming,
 Simple and provident, folding the numbered lambs.

No spatial streams, no tears
 Can melt the insensate piety of grief.
 Adore instead the untold event still happening;
 That miracle be the child I carry,
 All days, and all years.
 Come other south, come wise and holier thaws,
 Enlarge me to inhale so ample a breath;
 Come peace for he is coming.
 Between the lily in bud and the lily opening
 Love is, and love redeems.
 Come haven, come your hush, horizoning arms.

I shall not want, I wake renewed by death,
 A shepherd's coat drawn over me.

HERBERT READ

Time

O THAT I might believe that time
 Is but a measure thrown on things
 That hold existence in a sphere
 Intense alone, and always felt
 In full reality! For then
 I could evade despondency
 By magnifying to my frame
 The ecstatic beat that night and day
 Pulses within the milk-white walls
 Of mental sloth, eager to break
 Into the radiant release
 Of vision divine and precise.
 —Time that is a shrouded thought
 Involving earth and life in doubt.

ROBERT GRAVES

Lost Love

His eyes are quickened so with grief,
 He can watch a grass or leaf
 Every instant grow; he can
 Clearly through a flint wall see,
 Or watch the startled spirit flee
 From the throat of a dead man.

Across two counties he can hear,
And catch your words before you speak.
The woodlouse, or the maggot's weak
Clamour rings in his sad ear;
And noise so slight it would surpass
Credence:—drinking sound of grass,
Worm talk, clashing jaws of moth
Chumbling holes in cloth:
The groan of ants who undertake
Gigantic loads for honour's sake,
Their sinews creak, their breath comes thin:
Whir of spiders when they spin,
And minute whispering, mumbling, sighs
Of idle grubs and flies.

This man is quickened so with grief,
He wanders god-like or like thief
Inside and out, below, above,
Without relief seeking lost love.

391

A. S. J. TESSIMOND

CATS, no less liquid than their shadows,
Offer no angles to the wind.
They slip, diminished, neat, through loopholes
Less than themselves; will not be pinned

To rules or routes for journeys; counter
Attack with non-resistance; twist
Enticing through the curving fingers
And leave an angered, empty fist.

They wait, obsequious as darkness,
Quick to retire, quick to return:
Admit no aim or ethics; flatter
With reservations; will not learn

To answer to their names; are seldom
Truly owned till shot and skinned.
Cats, no less liquid than their shadows,
Offer no angles to the wind.

392

EDMUND BLUNDEN

Forefathers

HERE they went with smock and crook,
Toiled in the sun, lolled in the shade,
Here they mudded out the brook
And here their hatchet cleared the glade.
Harvest supper woke their wit,
Huntsman's moon their wooing lit.

From this church they led their brides,
From this church themselves were led
Shoulder-high; on these waysides
Sat to take their beer and bread.
Names are gone—what men they were
These their cottages declare.

Names are vanished, save the few
In the old brown Bible scrawled;
These were men of pith and thew,
Whom the city never called;
Scarce could read or hold a quill,
Built the barn, the forge, the mill.

On the green they watched their sons
 Playing till too dark to see,
As their fathers watched them once,
 As my father once watched me;
While the bat and beetle flew
On the warm air webbed with dew.

Unrecorded, unrenowned,
 Men from whom my ways begin,
Here I know you by your ground
 But I know you not within—
All is mist, and there survives
Not a moment of their lives.

-Like the bee that now is blown
 Honey-heavy on my hand,
From the toppling tansy-throne
 In the green tempestuous land—
I'm in clover now, nor know
Who made honey long ago.

393

The Barn

RAIN-SUNKEN roof, grown green and thin
For sparrows' nests and starlings' nests;
Dishevelled eaves; unwieldy doors,
Cracked rusty pump, and oaken floors,
And idly-pencilled names and jests
 Upon the posts within.

The light pales at the spider's lust,
The wind tangs through the shattered pane:
An empty hop-poke spreads across
The gaping frame to mend the loss
And keeps out sun as well as rain,
 Mildewed with clammy dust.

The smell of apples stored in hay
And homely cattle-cake is there.
Use and disuse have come to terms,
The walls are hollowed out by worms,
But men's feet keep the mid-floor bare
And free from worse decay.

All merry noise of hens astir
Or sparrows squabbling on the roof
Comes to the barn's broad open door;
You hear upon the stable floor
Old hungry Dapple strike his hoof,
And the blue fan-tail's whir.

The barn is old, and very old,
But not a place of spectral fear.
Cobwebs and dust and speckling sun
Come to old buildings every one.
Long since they made their dwelling here,
And here you may behold

Nothing but simple wane and change;
Your tread will wake no ghost, your voice
Will fall on silence undeterred.
No phantom wailing will be heard,
Only the farm's blithe cheerful noise;
The barn is old, not strange.

394

JAMES STEPHENS

NOTHING is easy! Pity then
The poet more than other men:

And, since his aim is ecstasy,
And, since none work so hard as he,
Forgive the poet poesy!

He hath the same dull eyes: his ears
Are dull-attuned: his hopes and fears
Are those same ravening dogs that bay
The moon, and bury bones in clay!

Tho' he on offals, too, was bred,
Tho' in his heart, and in his head
The brute doth slaver, yet he can
Banish the brute from off the man,
The man from that beyond the man.

He gave a song, a wing, to words
That they might fly and sing like birds
In love, who cannot too much sing
The heaven, the earth, the everything;
And love, the air that buoys along
The wing, the singer, and the song.

Yea, wonder is that he hath done,
For all that is beneath the sun
By magic he transfigures to
A better sound, a finer view:
And—loveliest tale of all that's true!
He tells that you come to the spring,
And that the spring returns to you.

EDWARD SHANKS

From Memory

IN silence and in darkness memory wakes
Her million sheathèd buds and breaks
That day-long winter when the light and noise
And hard bleak breath of the outward-looking will
Made barren her tender soil, when every voice
Of her million airy birds was muffled or still. . . .

O memory, take and keep
All that my eyes, your servants, bring you home!
Thick through the changing year
The unexpected, rich-charged moments come,
That you 'twixt wake and sleep
In the lids of the closed eyes shall make appear.
This is life's certain good,
Though in the end it be not good at all
When the dark end arises
And the stripped, startled spirit must let fall
The amulets that could
Prevail with life's but not death's sad devices.
Then, like a child from whom an older child
Forces its gathered treasures,
Its beads and shells and strings of withered flowers,
Tokens of recent pleasures,
The soul must lose from eyes weeping and wild
Those prints of vanished hours.

T. S. ELIOT

Preludes (I)

THE winter evening settles down
 With smells of steaks in passageways.
 Six o'clock.
 The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
 And now a gusty shower wraps
 The grimy scraps
 Of withered leaves about your feet
 And newspapers from vacant lots;
 The showers beat
 On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
 And at the corner of the street
 A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
 And then the lighting of the lamps.

A Game of Chess

THE Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
 Glowed on the marble, where the glass
 Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
 From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
 (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
 Doubled the flames of seven-branched candelabra
 Reflecting light upon the table as
 The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
 From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
 In vials of ivory and coloured glass

Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended

In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

"Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.

"What are you thinking off? What thinking? What?

"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door.

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"

Nothing again nothing.

"Do

"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
"Nothing?"

I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

But

O O O O that Shakespcherian Rag—

It's so elegant

So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"

"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

"With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?

"What shall we ever do?"

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

398

Animula

"Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul"
To a flat world of changing lights and noise,
To light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm;
Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs,
Rising or falling, grasping at kisses and toys,
Advancing boldly, sudden to take alarm,
Retreating to the corner of arm and knee,
Eager to be reassured, taking pleasure
In the fragrant brilliance of the Christmas tree,
Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea;
Studies the sunlit pattern on the floor
And running stags around a silver tray;
Confounds the actual and the fanciful,
Content with playing-cards and kings and queens,
What the fairies do and what the servants say.

The heavy burden of the growing soul
 Perplexes and offends more day by day;
 Week by week, offends and perplexes more
 With the imperatives of "is and seems"
 And may and may not, desire and control.
 The pain of living and the drug of dreams
 Curl up the small soul in the window seat
 Behind the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.
 Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
 Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
 Unable to fare forward or retreat,
 Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,
 Denying the importunity of the blood,
 Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom,
 Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room;
 Living first in the silence after the viaticum.

Pray for Guiterriez, avid of speed and power,
 For Boudin, blown to pieces,
 For this one who made a great fortune,
 And that one who went his own way.
 Pray for Floret, by the boarhound slain between the yew trees,
 Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth.

399

A Song for Simeon

LORD, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and
 The winter sun creeps by the snow hills;
 The stubborn season has made stand.
 My life is light, waiting for the death wind,
 Like a feather on the back of my hand.
 Dust in sunlight and memory in corners
 Wait for the wind that chills towards the dead land.

Grant us thy peace.
I have walked many years in this city,
Kept faith and fast, provided for the poor,
Have given and taken honour and ease.
There went never any rejected from my door.
Who shall remember my house, where shall live my children's
children

When the time of sorrow is come?
They will take to the goat's path, and the fox's home,
Fleeing from the foreign faces and the foreign swords.

Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation
Grant us thy peace.
Before the station of the mountain of desolation,
Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow,
Now at this birth season of decease,
Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,
Grant Israel's consolation
To one who has eighty years and no to-morrow.

According to thy word.
They shall praise Thee and suffer in every generation
With glory and derision,
Light upon light, mounting the saint's stair.
Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer,
Not for me the ultimate vision.
Grant me thy peace.

(And a sword shall pierce thy heart,
Thine also.)
I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me,
I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me.
Let thy servant depart,
Having seen thy salvation.

MARION ANGUS

Alas, poor Queen

SHE was skilled in music and the dance
 And the old arts of love
 And the court of the poisoned rose
 And the perfumed glove,
 And gave her beautiful hand
 To the pale Dauphin
 A triple crown to win—
 And she loved little dogs
 And parrots
 And red-legged partridges
 And the golden fishes of the Duc de Guise
 And a pigeon with a blue ruff
 She had from Monsieur d'Elboeuf.

Master John Knox was no friend to her;
 She spoke him soft and kind,
 Her honeyed words were Satan's lure
 The unwary soul to bind.
 "Good sir, doth a lissom shape
 And a comely face
 Offend your God His Grace
 Whose wisdom maketh these
 Golden fishes of the Duc de Guise?"

She rode through Liddesdale with a song;
 "Ye streams sae wondrous strang,
 Oh, mak' me a wrack as I come back
 But spare me as I gang."
 While a hill-bird cried and cried
 Like a spirit lost
 By the grey storm-wind tost.

Consider the way she had to go.
Think of the hungry snare,
The net she herself had woven,
Aware or unaware.
Of the dancing feet grown still,
The blinded eyes.
Queens should be cold and wise,
And she loved little things,

Parrots

And red-legged partridges
And the golden fishes of the Duc de Guise
And the pigeon with the blue ruff
She had from Monsieur d'Elboeuf.

401

W. H. AUDEN

From *The Ascent of F6*

DEATH like his is right and splendid;
That is how life should be ended!
He cannot calculate nor dread
The mortifying in the bed,
Powers wasting day by day
While the courage ebbs away.
Ever-charming, he will miss
The insulting paralysis,
Ruined intellect's confusion,

Ulcer's patient persecution,
 Sciatica's intolerance
 And the cancer's sly advance;
 Never hear, among the dead,
 The rival's brilliant paper read,
 Colleague's deprecating cough
 And the praises falling off;
 Never know how in the best
 Passion loses interest;
 Beauty sliding from the bone
 Leaves the rigid skeleton.

402

LOOK, stranger, at this island now
 The leaping light for your delight discovers,
 Stand stable here
 And silent be,
 That through the channels of the ear
 May wander like a river
 The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
 Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges
 Oppose the pluck
 And knock of the tide,
 And the shingle scrambles after the sucking surf, and the gull
 lodges
 A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
 Diverge on urgent voluntary errands;
 And the full view
 Indeed may enter
 And move in memory as now these clouds do,
 That pass the harbour mirror
 And all the summer through the water saunter.

C. DAY LEWIS

*To the Mother**(From Feathers to Iron, VI, XIX, XX)*

Now she is like the white tree-rose
 That takes a blessing from the sun:
 Summer has filled her veins with light,
 And her warm heart is washed with noon.

Or as a poplar, ceaselessly
 Gives a soft answer to the wind:
 Cool on the light her leaves lie sleeping,
 Folding a column of sweet sound.

Powder the stars. Forbid the night
 To wear those brilliants for a brooch
 So soon, dark death, you may close down
 The mines that made this beauty rich.

Her thoughts are pleiads, stooping low
 O'er glades where nightingale has flown:
 And like the luminous night around her
 She has at heart a certain dawn.

* * * * *

Do not expect again a phoenix hour,
 The triple-towered sky, the dove complaining,
 Sudden the rain of gold and heart's first ease
 Tranced under trees by the eldritch light of sundown.

By a blazed trail our joy will be returning:
 One burning hour throws light a thousand ways,
 And hot blood stays into familiar gestures.
 The best years wait, the body's plenitude.

Consider then, my lover, this is the end
Of the lark's ascending, the hawk's unearthly hover:
Spring season is over soon and first heatwave;
Grave-browed with cloud ponders the huge horizon.

Draw up the dew. Swell with pacific violence.
Take shape in silence. Grow as the clouds grew.
Beautiful brood the cornlands, and you are heavy;
Leafy the boughs—they also hide big fruit.

* * * * *

Sky-wide an estuary of light
Ebbs amid cloud banks out of sight.
At her star-anchorage shall swing
Earth, the old freighter, till morning.

Ride above your shadow and trim
Cargo till the stars grow dim:
Weigh then from the windless river;
You've a treasure to deliver.

Behold the incalculable seas
Change face for every cloud and breeze:
But a prime mover works inside,
The constant the integral tide.

Though black-bordered fancies vex
You and veering moods perplex,
Underneath's a current knowing
Well enough what way it's going.

!

Stroked by their windy shadows lie
The grainlands waving at the sky.
That golden grace must all be shed
To fill granaries, to make bread.

Do not grieve for beauty gone.
Limbs that ran to meet the sun
Lend their lightness to another;
Child shall recreate the mother.

404

Now raise your voices for a final chorus,
Lift the glasses, drink tomorrow's health—
Success to the doctor who is going to cure us
And those who will die no more in bearing wealth.
On our magnetic mountain a beacon burning
Shall sign the peace we hoped for, soon or late,
Clear over a clean earth, and all men turning
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

Drink to the ordered nerves, the sight restored;
A day when power for all shall radiate
From the sovereign centres, and the blood is stirred
To flow in its ancient courses of love and hate:
When the country vision is ours that like a barn
Fills the heart with slow-matured delight,
Absorbing wind and summer, till we turn
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

For us to dream the birthday, but they shall act it—
Bells over fields, the hooters from the mine,
On New Year's Eve under the bridegroom's attic
Chorus of coastguards singing Auld Lang Syne.
Now at hope's horizon that day is dawning,
We guess at glory from a mountain height,
But then in valley towns they will be turning
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

Beckon, O beacon, and O sun be soon!
Hollo, bells, over a melting earth!
Let man be many and his sons all sane,
Fearless with fellows, handsome by the hearth.
Break from your trance: start dancing now in town,
And, fences down, the ploughing match with mate.
This is your day: so turn, my comrades, turn
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

405

Juvenilia

So this is you
That was an I twenty-five years ago—
One I may neither disown nor renew.
Youth of the smouldering heart, the seamless brow,
What affinity between you and me?
You are a skin I have long since cast,
A ghost I carry now:
I am the form you blindly, fitfully glassed,
And the finish of your bright vow.

When I seek to peer,
Through the fancy-dress words wherein you are woodenly posed
And to feel the ardours quivering there,
I am as one eavesdropping upon a captive past
Of which nothing remains but echoes and chains.
Yet, could I lay bare that primitive mural
Whereon I am superimposed,
What boldness of line and colour, what pure quaint moral
Emblems might be disclosed!

Youth of the seamless brow, the smouldering heart,
You are my twin,
Yet we seem worlds apart.

More than mere time-grains pile this desert between:
The sands that efface each instant trace
Of my passage—I think they proceed
From my own nature, their origin
Some inexhaustible need
For oblivion, and reservoir of it, deep within.

Were it not so, surely I could remember
The lyric light,
The primrose-and-violet ember
Which was your soul, my soul, when we came to write
These poems. But gone is the breath of dawn,
Clinker the dreams it fanned:
These bones, anonymous now and trite,
Are a message scrawled on the sand
That only in dying could a self indite.

What links the real to the wraith?
My self repudiates myself of yesterday;
But the words it lived in and cast like a shell keep faith
With that dead self always.
And if aught holds true between me and you,
It is a heart whose prism can break
Life's primal rays
Into a spectrum of passionate tones, and awake
Fresh blossom for truth to swell and sway.

Speak to me, then, from the haunted
Hollow of fears and yearnings lost to view,
The instrument my youth, your truth, first sounded—
This heart of impassioned hue!
Speak through the crystal, tell me the gist
Of the shadowy sequence that now is I—
What unseen clue
Threads my pearl-sliding hours, what symmetry
My death and metaphors pursue!

When a phoenix opens her rainbow span,
The ashes she rose from warmly speak,
"Your flight, which ends in fire as it began,
Is fuelled by all you seek."
O beacon bird, I too am fired
To bring some message home
Whose meaning I know not. So from peak to peak
I run—my life, maybe, a palindrome,
But each lap unique.

And since at every stage I need
A death, a new self to reveal me,
And only through oblivion's veil can read
The signs of what befell me,
May not the grave of mortal love
Be but one more abyss
Between two peaks, appointed to compel me
Along the chain of light? . . . Dead youth, is this
What you have to tell me?

406

LOUIS MACNEICE

Now that the shapes of mist like hooded beggar-children
Slink quickly along the middle of the road
And the lamps draw trails of milk in ponds of lustrous lead
I am decidedly pleased not to be dead.

Or when wet roads at night reflect the clutching
Importunate fingers of trees and windy shadows
Lunge and flounce on the windscreen as I drive
I am glad of the accident of being alive.

There are so many nights with stars or close-
ly interleaved with battleship-grey or plum,
So many visitors whose Buddha-like palms are pressed
Against the window-panes where people take their rest.

Whose favour now is yours to screen your sleep—
You need not hear the strings that are tuning for the dawn—
Mingling, my dear, your breath with the quiet breath
Of Sleep whom the old writers called the brother of death.

407

STEPHEN SPENDER

The Pylons

THE secret of these hills was stone, and cottages
Of that stone made,
And crumbling roads
That turned on sudden hidden villages.

Now over these small hills they have built the concrete
That trails black wire:
Pylons, those pillars
Bare like nude, giant girls that have no secret.

The valley with its gilt and evening look
And the green chestnut
Of customary root
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

But far above and far as sight endures
Like whips of anger
With lightning's danger
There runs the quick perspective of the future.

This dwarfs our emerald country by its track
So tall with prophecy:
Dreaming of cities
Where often clouds shall lean their swan-white neck.

I THINK continually of those who were truly great,
 Who, from the womb, remembered the soul's history
 Through corridors of light where the hours are suns
 Endless and singing. Whose lovely ambition
 Was that their lips, still touched with fire,
 Should tell of the spirit clothed from head to foot in song,
 And who hoarded from the spring branches
 The desires falling across their bodies like blossoms.

What is precious is never to forget
 The essential delight of the blood drawn from ageless springs
 Breaking through rocks in worlds before our earth.
 Never to deny its pleasure in the morning simple light
 Nor its grave evening demand for love.
 Never to allow gradually the traffic to smother
 With noise and fog the flowering of the spirit.

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields
 See how these names are fêted by the waving grass
 And by the streamers of white cloud
 And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
 The names of those who in their lives fought for life
 Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
 Born of the sun they travelled a short while towards the sun,
 And left the vivid air signed with their honour.

*Recollection: The Pilots who destroyed Germany,
Spring, 1945*

I STOOD on a roof-top and they wove their cage,
Their murmuring drumming cage, in the air of blue crystal.
I saw them gleam above the town like diamond bolts
Conjoining invisible struts of wire,
Carrying through the sky their geometric cage,
Woven by lives delicate as a shoal of flashing fish.

They went. They left a silence in our streets below
As boys gone to schoolroom leave in their playground.
A silence of asphalt, of privet hedge, of staring wall.
In the blue emptied sky their diamonds had scratched
Long curving finest whitest lines.
These the day soon melted into satin ribbons
Falling over heaven's terraces near the golden sun.

Oh that April morning they carried my will
Exalted expanding singing in their aerial cage.
They carried my will. They dropped it on a German town.
My will exploded and tall buildings fell down.

Then, when the ribbons faded and the sky forgot
And April was concerned with building nests and being hot
I began to remember names and faces.

Now I tie the ribbons torn down from those terraces
Around the most hidden image in my lines
And my life, which never paid the price of their wounds,
Turns thoughts over and over like a propeller,
Assumes their guilt, honours, repents, prays for them.

RICHARD CHURCH

IMAGINING mischief against everyman
 May last, for men as they grow old grow cunning.
 Only the young look at the stars when running.
 After they've stumbled, they begin to plan.
 Thus the conspiracy of politics
 Renews itself; another generation
 Loses its young, progressive inspiration,
 And learns, in office, all the ancient tricks.

Who shall preserve us from this inward change,
 This conscious, creeping process, gradual,
 And helplessly observed, by which we fall
 To the usurper in ourselves, whose strange
 Cold intrigue now directs the part
 Once played by nature in a guileless heart?

JOHN PUDNEY

For Johnny

Do not despair
 For Johnny-head-in-air;
 He sleeps as sound
 As Johnny under ground.

Fetch out no shroud
 For Johnny-in-the-cloud;
 And keep your tears
 For him in after years.

Better by far
 For Johnny-the-bright-star,
 To keep your head,
 And see his children fed.

The Worn Clothes

IN this white cemetery of the mind
 Peopled by day with mourners shuffling behind
 Hedges to tip dead tributes
 And to replenish with bought flowers their sacrifice,
 We'll throw our dice.

Here, in the night, no sound shall spoil the game
 Nor recognising star shall single out one name.
 Here in the spirit's winter:
 Here many a one before us, naked, diced
 For the worn clothes of Christ.

MARTYN SKINNER

NAY, Alex, be not vexed, though now and then
 A letter turns to verse beneath my pen.
 'Twill not be often, and 'twill not be long,
 And sense I promise, modern though the song.
 For now and then, I tell you, comes a time
 When the frisk nib curvets, and longs to rhyme.
 Many the reasons—Spring, a cobweb's dew,
 Marriage, or Crisis, or a rug from you;
 Half China conquered, or a landscape spoiled;
 A tiff at breakfast, or the world embroiled;
 Grim aerial flotillas drumming by;
 The intricate completeness of a fly;
 A rainbow in a soapsud; some chance line
 Of someone's poetry, or your praise of mine;

A frozen landscape, where, by snowy rills,
 Dusky a swan in pallid bulrush chills;
 That veil of stars gauzing the frosty night,
 A million worlds turned to a mist of light;
 Or slant Orion, glittering in his stride,
 Touching with starry foot the dark hillside.
 Or else 'tis aspiration stirs my rhyme
 To shake some pollen o'er the scythe of Time;
 Or else some Sibyl in me has her throes;
 Or else I'm merely tired of writing prose:
 —Whate'er the reasons, you must face the fact;
 Expect these jingles, and employ your tact;
 Vow my Epistles are the Age's hope,
 And Alexander's once more joined to Pope.

414

ALUN LEWIS

1915-1944

Postscript; to Giveno

If I should go away,
 Beloved, do not say
 "He has forgotten me."
 For you abide,
 A singing rib within my dreaming side;
You always stay.
 And in the mad tormented valley
 Where blood and hunger rally
 And Death the wild beast is uncaught, untamed,
 Our soul withstands the terror
 And has its quiet honour
 Among the glittering stars your voices named.

Infantry

By day these men ask nothing, and obey;
They eat their bread behind a heap of stones;
Hardship and violence grow an easy way;
Winter is like a girl within their bones.

They learn the gambits of the soul
Think lightly of the themes of life and death,
All mortal anguish shrunk into an ache
Too nagging to be worth the catch of breath.

Sharing life's iron rations, marching light,
Enduring to the end the early cold,
The emptiness of noon, the void of night
In whose black market they are bought and sold,
They take their stolid stations for the fight.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

Bombing Practice

IN the long estuary now the water
At the top and turn of the tide
Is quiet as a mountain tarn,
Smooth and dull as pewter,
Pale as the mauve sea-aster
In the turf of the gutter-side.

The fells are purple and blurred in the haze above the marshes;
The gulls float like bubbles,
Plovers band together with white bellies
Square into the wind;
A curlew flies crying along the gullies;
A faint rainbow of oil is clogged in the thin rushes.

The swinging aeroplane drops seed through the air
Plumb into the water, where slowly it grows
Boles of smoke and trees
Of swelling and ballooning leafage,
Silver as willows
Or white as a blossoming pear.

The trees float seaward, spreading and filling like sails,
And the smoke mingles with the sea-mist when
The breeze shreds it. And the curlew sadly cries
That things so beautiful as these
Shall fall through nights of winter gales
And plant their germs of pain in the limbs of men.

417

The Blackberry

BETWEEN the railway and the mine
Brambles are in fruit again.
 Their little nigger fists they clench
 And hold the branches in a clinch.
Waggons of ore are shunted past,
And spray the berries with red dust,
 Which dulls the bright mahogany
 Like purple sawdust clogged and dry.
But when the housewife, wind-and-rain,
Rubs the berry spick and span,
 Compound it gleams like a fly's eye,
 And every ball reflects the sky.
There the world's repeated like
Coupons in a ration book;
 There the tall curved chimneys spread
 Purple smoke on purple cloud.

Grant us to know that hours rushed by
Are photographed upon God's eye;
That life and leaf are both preserved
In gelatine of Jesus' blood.
And grant to us the sense to feel
The large condensed within the small;
Wash clear our eyes that we may see
The sky within the blackberry.

418

E. M. BARRAUD

My shadow is ten yards high;
I am as big as the giant of Cerne Abbas
Or the Long Man of Wilmington.
I march astride golden shocks of cut corn
And between my thighs is all the fruitfulness of the earth.
I am the farm worker going home at evening.

419

HENRY TREECE

Walking at Night

Thus I would walk abroad when gentle night
Puts on her friend's cool cloak and bids me come,
Walk among beds of lightly sleeping flowers,
Budded in silver dreams of friendliness.

And I would lie among the dainty herbs,
Like catmint, parsley or exquisite thyme,
To watch the late birds, twittering, hurry home
Across the moon's great watchful eye, to love . . .

These things, like dreams of princesses and pearls,
Come to me more as iron days grate on;
The brush of blood paints not a ruined world
But thyme and parsley underneath the moon.

420

DYLAN THOMAS

We lying by seasand, watching yellow
And the grave sea, mock who deride
Who follow the red rivers, hollow
Alcove of words out of cicada shade,
For in this yellow grave of sand and sea
A calling for colour calls with the wind
That's grave and gay as grave and sea
Sleeping on either hand.
The lunar silences, the silent tide
Lapping the still canals, the dry tide-master
Ribbed between desert and water storm,
Should cure our ills of the water
With a one-coloured calm;
The heavenly music over the sand
Sounds with the grains as they hurry
Hiding the golden mountains and mansions
Of the grave, gay seaside land.
Bound by a sovereign strip, we lie,
Watch yellow, wish for wind to blow away
The strata of the shore and leave red rock;
But wishes breed not, neither
Can we fend off the rock arrival,
Lie watching yellow until the golden weather
Breaks, O my heart's blood, like a heart and hill.

DAVID GASCOYNE

Ex Nihilo

HERE am I now cast down
 Beneath the bleak glare of a netherworld's
 Blind suns, dust in my heart; among
 Dun tiers no tears refresh am cast
 Down by a lofty hand:

Hand that I love! Lord Light
 How dark is Thy arm's will and ironlike
 Thy ruler's finger that has sent me here!
 Far from Thy Face, I nothing understand,
 But kiss the Hand that has consigned

Me to this latter world where I must learn
 The revelation of despair and find
 Among the debris of all certainties
 The hardest stone on which to found
 Altar and shelter for Eternity.

SIDNEY KEYES

1922-1943

War Poet

I AM the man who looked for peace and found
 My own eyes barbed.
 I am the man who groped for words and found
 An arrow in my hand.
 I am the builder whose firm walls surround
 A slipping land.

When I grow sick or mad
Mock me not nor chain me;
When I reach for the wind
Cast me not down:
Though my face is a burnt book
And a wasted town.

423

William Wordsworth

No room for mourning; he's gone out
Into the noisy glen, or stands between the stones
Of the gaunt ridge, or you'll hear his shout
Rolling across the screes, he being a boy again.
He'll never fail nor die
And if they laid his bones
In the wet vaults or iron sarcophagi
Of fame, he'd rise at the first summer rain
And stride across the hills to seek
His rest among the broken lands and clouds.
He was a stormy day, a granite peak
Spearing the sky; and look, about its base
Words flower like crocuses in the hanging woods
Blank though the dalehead and the bony face.

424

Death and the Plowman

The Rider. O DON'T, don't ever ask me for alms:
The winter way I'm riding. Beggar, shun
My jingling bonebag equipage, beware
My horse's lifted hoof, the sinewed whip.

I am the man started a long time since
To drive into the famous land some call
Posterity, some famine, some the valley
Of bones, valley of bones, valley of dry
Bones where a critical mind is always searching
The poor dried marrow for a drop of truth.
Better for you to ask no alms, my friend.

The Plowman. It's only the wind holds my poor bones together
So take me with you to that famous land.
There I might wither, as I'm told some do,
Out of my rags and boast at last
The integrated skeleton of truth.

The Rider. The wind creeps sharper there, my hopeful friend
Than you imagine. There the crooked trees
Bend like old fingers; and at Hallowmas
The Lord calls erring bones to dance a figure.

The Plowman. What figure, friend? Why should I fear the
dancing?

The Rider. No man may reasonably dance
That figure, friend. One saw it, one Ezekiel
Was only spared to tell of it. That valley
Is no man's proper goal, but some must seek it.

The Plowman. I might get clothing there. A skeleton
Cannot go naked.

The Rider. Naked as the sky
And lonely as the elements, the man
Who knows that land. The drypoint artist there
Scrabbles among the wreckage; poets follow
The hard crevasses, silly as starved gulls
That scream behind the plow. Don't stop me
friend,
Unless you are of those, and your fool's pride
Would lure you to that land . . .

- The Plowman.* I will go with you.
 Better plow-following, the searching wind
 About my bones, than this nonentity.
- The Rider.* Then get you up beside me, gull-brained fool.
- oth.* We're driving to the famous land some call
 Posterity, some famine, some the valley
 Of bones, valley of bones, valley of dry
 Bones where there is no heat nor hope nor
 dwelling:
 But cold security, the one and only
 Right of a workless man without a home.

425

A Hope for those Separated by War

THEY crossed her face with blood,
 They hung her heart.
 They dragged her through a pit
 Full of quick sorrow.
 Yet her small feet
 Ran back on the morrow.

They took his book and caged
 His mind in a dark house.
 They took his bright eyes
 To light their rooms of doubt.
 Yet his thin hands
 Crawled back and found her out.

Part Two

NARRATIVE POETRY

"Once . . . once upon a time . . ."

I

THE BALLAD

*"I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I felt
my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is
by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude*

SIR PHILIP SII

The Defence :

CENTURIES before the novel was dreamed of in England, tales were being told in verse, tales of tragedy and rough humour, legend and superstition, love and battle and local events of human interest such as would make a "news story" today. These ballads were of unknown authorship, stories which "just grew" and circulated in a multitude of versions in recitation or in song. "Sung but by some blind crowder," writes Sidney, yet admitting how his heart was moved by the tale of the decrepit minstrel "more than with a trumpet". For us, too, "their enchantment has no match," De la Mare has written in that most delightful of all Anthologies, *Come Hither*, "the very strangeness of the words, their rare music, the colour and light and clearness and vehemence, and, besides these, a wildness and ancientness like that of folk tune which seems to carry with its burden as many lost memories as an old churchyard has gravestones. The stories they tell are world-wide. How they first came into being . . . how they have fared in their long journey in time, and even when and by whom they were made are questions on which even scholars are not yet agreed." A few of these ballads first found their way into print as broadsheets or in 17th-century miscellanies, but it was 18th-century collections like Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Scottish Poetry* and Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs* which really stirred public interest and made people realise what was there to be salvaged before it should be too late. Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* is a glorious collection of ballads, and so, in a much more monumental way and presenting a wide selection of variant versions, is Professor Child's *English and Scottish Ballads*.

Many of these ballads read as freshly and vigorously today as when they were first composed. The story is the thing; and because it was told not for print but to hold the attention of an unlettered audience, strength and simplicity are its life-blood. The economy of a ballad like *Sir Patrick Spens* (IX) is amazing. No word is wasted. Dialogue and description in all the ballads are cut to the bone, and the refrain is an integral part of them, knitting together the narrative as

well as serving the purpose of a line of chorus. The metre is simple always, so simple that it is easy to imagine the inventive throwing in a verse or two on their own account, or filling in where memory failed. There are many and fascinating theories about "community origin" for the ballad, but when you come to something like *O waly, waly* (X) or *Helen of Kirconnell* (XI) it is impossible to imagine that the minds which devised them were not those of single, though nameless, poets.

This is a very small selection of ballads, but I have tried to make it fairly representative of the different types which flourished between the 14th and 16th centuries. Because ballad and folk-song must be thought of as two forms never far apart, I have included one "Song of the West" (XVI). The ballad attributed to Rowlands (XVII) has its interest as a sort of half-way house between true ballad and "the poet's story"; the author shows his hand as no ballad-maker does in his tale. You can easily find for yourself a hundred other ballads which will make you regret that "the secret of this lovely and naked poetry has been lost". Lost it is, for though the ballad died no sudden death, it deteriorated sadly. Victorian ballads have sentimental appeal, all too much of it, but not much more; street ballads, like the Irish one "The Night before Larry was stretched", have vigour, but not much more. In America, where the conditions which gave rise to ballad poetry lasted longer, the ballad has a longer history worth pursuing. As for the ballad imitations of our poets, they are often pretty, as pastiche can be. You will see a sample in Morris's *Two Red Roses across the Moon*. But to me there seems more of the true ballad spirit in Scott's lyric snatch, *Proud Maisie* (XLII) Drayton's *Agincourt* (XXVI), or Keats' *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, lovely and subtle and haunting, "beauty making beautiful old rhyme".

St. Stephen

SAINT Stephen was a clerk in King Herod's hall,
And served him of bread and cloth, as ever king befall.

Stephen out of kitchen came with boar's head in hand,
He saw a star was fair and bright over Bethlehem stand.

He cast adown the boar's head and went into the hall:
"I forsake thee, King Herod, and thy workës all.

"I forsake thee, King Herod, and thy workës all;
There is a child in Bethlehem born is better than we all."

"What aileth thee, Stephen, what is thee befall?
Lacketh thee either meat or drink in King Herod's hall?"

"Lacketh me neither meat nor drink in King Herod's hall,
There is a child in Bethlehem born is better than we all."

"What aileth thee, Stephen, art thou mad, or thou ginnest to
brede,
Lacketh thee either gold or fee or any richë weed?"

"Lacketh me neither gold nor fee nor no richë weed,
There is a child born in Bethlehem born shall help us at our need."

"That is all so sooth, Stephen, all so sooth iwis
As this capon crow (it) shall that lieth in my dish."

That word was no soone said, that word in that hall,
The capon crew, *Christus natus est*, among the lordës all.

brede] rave; sooth] true; iwis] certainly.

"Riseth up, my tormentors, by twos and all by one,
And leadeth Stephen out of this town, and stoneth him with
stone."

Took (they then) Stephen and stoned him in the way,
Therefore is his even on Christ's own day.

II

The Three Ravens

THERE were three ravens sat on a tree,
 Downe, a downe, hay downe, hay downe,
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
 With a downe,
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as black as they might be,
 With a downe, derrie, derrie, derrie, downe, downe.

The one of them said to his mate,
"Where shall we our breakfast take?"—

"Down in yonder green field,
There lies a knight slain under his shield.

"His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So well they can their master keep.

"His hawks they flie so eagerly,
There's no fowl dare him come nigh."

Down there comes a fallow doe,
As great with young as she might go.

She lift up his bloody head,
And kist his wounds that were so red.

She got him up on her back,
And carried him to earthen lake.

She buried him before the prime,
She was dead herself ere evensong time.

God send every gentleman
Such hawks, such hounds, and such a leman.
lake] grave; leman] lover, friend.

III

IN somer when the shawes be sheyne,
And leves be large and long,
Hit is full merry in feyre foreste
To here the foulis song.

To se the dere draw to the dale
And leve the hilles hee,
And shadow him in the leves grene
Under the green-wode tree.

Hit befell on Whitsontide
Early in a May mornyng,
The Sonne up faire can shyne,
And the briddis mery can syng.

"This is a mery mornyng," said Litulle Johne,
"Be hym that dyed on tre;
A more mery man than I am one
Lyves not in Christiante.

"Pluk up thi hert, my dere mayster,"
Litulle Johne can say,
"And thynk hit is a fulle fayre tyme
In a mornyng of May."
sheyne] bright.

IV

Robin Hood and the Tanner

IN Nottingham there lives a jolly tanner,
With a hey down down a down down,
His name is Arthur a Bland;
There is nere a squire in Nottinghamshire
Dare bid bold Arthur stand.

With a long pike-staff upon his shoulder,
So well he can clear his way;
By two and by three he makes them to flee,
For he hath no list to stay.

And as he went forth, in a sumner's morning,
Into the forrest of merry Sherwood,
To view the red deer, that range here and there,
There met he with bold Robin Hood.

As soon as bold Robin Hood did him espy,
He thought some sport he would make;
Therefore out of hand he bid him to stand,
And thus to him he spake:

"Why, what art thou, thou bold fellow,
That ranges so boldly here?
In sooth, to be brief, thou lookst like a thief,
That comes to steal our king's deer.

"For I am a keeper in this forrest;
The king puts me in trust
To look to his deer, that range here and there,
Therefore stay thee I must."

"If thou beest a keeper in this forrest,
And hast such a great command,
Yet thou must have more partakers in store,
Before thou make me to stand."

"Nay, I have no more partakers in store,
Or any that I do need,
But I have a staff of another oke graff,
I know it will do the deed."

"Marry gep with a wenion!" quoth Arthur a Bland,
"Art thou such a goodly man?
I care not a fig for thy looking so big;
Mend thou thyself where thou can." . . .

And about and about and about they went,
Like two wild bores in a chase;
Striving to aim each other to main,
Leg, arm, or any other place.

And knock for knock they lustily dealt,
Which held for two hours and more;
That all the wood rang at every bang,
They ply'd their work so sore.

"Hold thy hand, hold thy hand", said Robin Hood,
"And let our quarrel fall;
For here we may thrash our bones to mesh,
And get no coyn at all.

"And in the forrest of merry Sherwood
Hereafter thou shalt be free:"
"God-a-mercy for naught, my freedom I bought,
I may thank my good staff, and not thee."

"What tradesman art thou?" said jolly Robin,
"Good fellow, I prethee me show:
And let me know in what place thou dost dwell,
For both these fain would I know."

"I am a tanner," bold Arthur reply'd,
"In Nottingham long have I wrought;
And if thou'lt come there, I vow and do swear,
I will tan thy hide for naught."

"God a mercy, good fellow," said jolly Robin,
"Since thou art so kind to me;
And if thou wilt tan my hide for naught,
I will do as much for thee.

"But if thou'lt forsake thy tanner's trade,
And live in the green wood with me,
My name's Robin Hood, I swear by the rood
I will give thee both gold and fee."

"If thou be Robin Hood," bold Arthur reply'd,
"As I think well thou art,
Then here's my hand, my name's Arthur a Bland,
We two will never depart.

"But tell me, O tell me, where is Little John?
Of him fain would I hear;
For we are alide by the mothers side,
And he is my kinsman near."

Then Robin Hood blew on the beugle horn,
He blew full lowd and shrill,
But quickly anon appeard Little John,
Come tripping down a green hill.

"O what is the matter?" then said Little John,
"Master, I pray you tell;
Why do you stand with your staff in your hand?
I fear all is not well."

"O man, I do stand, and he makes me to stand,
The tanner that stands thee beside;
He is a bonny blade, and master of his trade,
For soundly he hath tand my hide."

"He is to be commended," then said Little John,
"If such a feat he can do;
If he be so stout, we will have a bout,
And he shall tan my hide too."

"Hold thy hand, hold thy hand," said Robin Hood,
"For as I do understand,
He's a yeoman good, and of thine own blood,
For his name is Arthur a Bland."

Then Little John threw his staff away,
As far as he could it fling,
And ran out of hand to Arthur a Bland,
And about his neck did cling. . . .

Then Robin Hood took them both by the hand,
And danc'd round about the oke tree;
"For three merry men, for three merry men,
And three merry men we be.

"And ever hereafter, as long as I live,
We three will be all one;
The wood shall ring, and the old wife sing,
Of Robin Hood, Arthur, and John."

V

Get Up and Bar the Door

I

It fell about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our goodwife got puddings to make,
And she's boil'd them in the pan.

II

The wind sae cauld blew south and north,
And blew into the floor;
Quoth our goodman to our goodwife,
"Gae out and bar the door."—

III

"My hand is in my hussyfskap,
Goodman, as ye may see;
An' it shou'dna be barr'd this hundred year,
It's no be barr'd for me."

IV

They made a paction 'tween them twa,
They made it firm and sure,
That the first word whae'er shou'd speak,
Shou'd rise and bar the door.

V

Then by there came two gentlemen,
At twelve o'clock at night,
And they could neither see house nor hall,
Nor coal nor candle-light.

VI

"Now whether is this a rich man's house,
Or whether is it a poor?"
But ne'er a word wad ane o' them speak,
For barring of the door.

VII

And first they ate the white puddings,
And then they ate the black.
Tho' muckle thought the goodwife to hersel'
Yet ne'er a word she spake.

VIII

Then said the one unto the other,
"Here, man, tak ye my knife;
Do ye tak off the auld man's beard,
And I'll kiss the goodwife."—

IX

"But there's nae water in the house,
 And what shall we do then?"—
 "What ails ye at the pudding-broo,
 That boils into the pan?"

X

O up then started our goodman,
 An angry man was he:
 "Will ye kiss my wife before my een,
 And sca'd me wi' pudding-bree?"

XI

Then up and started our goodwife,
 Gied three skips on the floor;
 "Goodman, you've spoken the foremost word!
 Get up and bar the door."

VI

A Lyke-Wake Dirge

THIS ae nighte, this ae nighte,
 —*Every nighte and alle,*
 Fire and fleet and candle-light,
And Christe receive thy saule.

When thou from hence away art past,
 —*Every nighte and alle,*
 To Whinny-muir thou comst at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

fleet] water, embers or house-room. This reading is better in sound and sense though certainly not so well authenticated as *sleet* (salt).

If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,
—*Every nighte and alle,*
Sit thee down and put them on;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane
—*Every nighte and alle,*
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Whinny-muir when thou mayst pass,
—*Every nighte and alle,*
To Brig o' Dread thou com'st at last;
And Christe receive thy saule.

From Brig o' Dread when thou may'st pass,
—*Every nighte and alle,*
To Purgatory fire thou com'st at last,
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gav'st meat and drink,
—*Every nighte and alle,*
The fire shall never make thee shrink;
And Christe receive thy saule.

If meat or drink thou ne'er gav'st nane,
—*Every nighte and alle,*
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane;
And Christe receive thy saule.

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
—*Every nighte and alle,*
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,
And Christe receive thy saule.

whinnes] gorse.
brig] bridge.

VII

Fine Flowers in the Valley

SHE sat down below a thorn,
 Fine flowers in the valley;
And there she has her sweet babe borne,
 And the green leaves they grow rarely.

"Smile na sae sweet, my bonny babe,
 Fine flowers in the valley.
And ye smile sae sweet, ye'll smile me dead,"
 And the green leaves they grow rarely.

She's ta'en out her little penknife,
 Fine flowers in the valley,
And twinn'd the sweet babe o' its life,
 And the green leaves they grow rarely.

She's howket a grave by the light o' the moon,
 Fine flowers in the valley,
And there she's buried her sweet babe in,
 And the green leaves they grow rarely.

As she was going to the church,
 Fine flowers in the valley,
She saw a sweet babe in the porch,
 And the green leaves they grow rarely.

"O sweet babe an' thou wert mine,
 Fine flowers in the valley,
I wad clead thee in the silk so fine,"
 And the green leaves they grow rarely.

"O mother dear, when I was thine,
 Fine flowers in the valley,
Ye did na prove to me sae kind,"
 And the green leaves they grow rarely.

houket] dug; clead] clothe.

VIII

The Battle of Otterbourne

It fell about the Lanmas tide,
When the muir men win their hay,
The doughty Douglas bound him to ride
Into England, to drive a prey.

He chose the Gordons and the Graemes,
With them the Lindesays, light and gay,
But the Jardines wald not with him ride,
And they rue it to this day.

And he has burn'd the dales of Tyne,
And part of Bambrough shire;
And three good towns on Reidswire fells,
He left them all on fire.

And he march'd up to Newcastle,
And rode it round about;
"O wha's the lord of this castle,
Or wha's the lady o't?"

But up spake proud Lord Percy, then,
And O but he spake hie!
"I am the lord of this castle,
My wife's the lady gay."

"If thou'rt the lord of this castle,
Sae weel it pleases me!
For, ere I cross the Border fells,
The tane of us shall die."—

He took a lang spear in his hand,
Shod with the metal free,
And for to meet the Douglas there,
He rode right furiously.

But O how pale his lady look'd,
Frae off the castle wa'.
When down before the Scottish spear
She saw proud Percy fa'.

"Had we twa been upon the green,
And never an eye to see,
wad hae had you, flesh and fell;
But your sword sall gae wi' me."—

"But gae ye up to Otterbourne,
And wait there dayis three;
And, if I come not ere three dayis end,
A fause knight ca' ye me."—

"The Otterbourne's a bonnie burn;
'Tis pleasant there to be;
But there is nought at Otterbourne,
To feed my men and me.

"The deer rins wild on hill and dale,
The birds fly wild from tree to tree;
But there is neither bread nor kale,
To feed my men and me.

"Yet I will stay at Otterbourne,
Where you shall welcome be;
And, if ye come not at three dayis end,
A fause lord I'll ca' thee."—

"Thither will I come," proud Percy said,
"By the might of Our Lady!"
"There will I bide thee," said the Douglas,
"My troth I plight to thee."

They lighted high on Otterbourne,
Upon the bent sae brown;
They lighted high on Otterbourne,
And threw their pallions down.

And he that had a bonnie boy,
Sent out his horse to grass;
And he that had not a bonnie boy,
His ain servant he was.

But up then spake a little page,
Before the peep of dawn—
“O waken ye, waken ye, my good lord,
For Percy’s hard at hand.”—

“Ye lie, ye lie, ye liar loud!
Sae loud I hear ye lie:
For Percy had not men yestreen
To dight my men and me.

“But I have dream’d a dreary dream,
Beyond the Isle of Skye;
I saw a dead man win a fight,
And I think that man was I.”

He belted on his guid braid sword,
And to the field he ran;
But he forgot the helmet good,
That should have kept his brain.

When Percy wi’ the Douglas met,
I wat he was fu’ fain!
They swakked their swords, till sair they swat,
And the blood ran down like rain.

But Percy with his good broad sword,
That could so sharply wound,
Has wounded Douglas on the brow,
Till he fell to the ground.

Then he call’d on his little foot-page,
And said—“Run speedilie,
And fetch my ain dear sister’s son,
Sir Hugh Montgomery.

"My nephew good," the Douglas said,
"What recks the death of ane!
Last night I dream'd a dreary dream,
And I ken the day's thy ain."

"My wound is deep; I fain would sleep;
Take thou the vanguard of the three,
And hide me by the braken bush,
That grows on yonder lilye lee."

"O bury me by the braken bush,
Beneath the blooming brier,
Let never living mortal ken
That ere a kindly Scot lies here."

He lifted up that noble lord,
Wi' the saut tear in his e'e;
He hid him in the braken bush,
That his merrie-men might not see.

The moon was clear, the day drew near,
The spears in flinders flew,
But mony a gallant Englishman
Ere day the Scotsmen slew.

The Gordons good, in English blood,
They steep'd their hose and shoon;
The Lindsays flew like fire about,
Till all the fray was done.

The Percy and Montgomery met,
That either of other were fain;
They swapped swords, and they twa swat,
And aye the blood ran down between.

"Now yield thee, yield thee, Percy," he said,
"Or else I vow I'll lay thee low!"
"To whom must I yield," quoth Earl Percy,
"Now that I see it must be so?"—

"Thou shalt not yield to lord nor loun,
Nor yet shalt thou yield to me;
But yield thee to the braken bush,
That grows upon yon lilyc lee!"—

"I will not yield to a braken bush,
Nor yet will I yield to a brier;
But I would yield to Earl Douglas,
Or Sir Hugh the Montgomery, if he were here."

As soon as he knew it was Montgomery,
He struck his sword's point in the gronde;
The Montgomery was a courteous knight,
And quickly took him by the honde.

This deed was done at the Otterbourne
About the breaking of the day;
Earl Douglas was buried at the braken bush,
And the Percy led captive away.

IX

Sir Patrick Spens

THE king sits in Dumferling toun,
Drinking the blude-reid wine:
"O whar will I get guid sailor
To sail this schip of mine?"

Up and spak an eldern knicht,
Sat at the kings richt kne:
"Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor
That sails upon the se."

The king has written a braid letter,
And signd it wi his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand:

The first line that Sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch lauched he;
The next line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee.

"O wha is this has don this deid,
This ill deid don to me,
To send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the se!

"Mak haste, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne."
"O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.

"Late late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme."

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone;
Bot lang owre a' the play were playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.

O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll see thame na mair.

Half owre, haf owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lord at his feit.

X

O, waly, waly

O Waly, waly, up the bank,
 And waly, waly, down the brae,
 And waly, waly, yon burn-side,
 Where I and my Love wont to gae!

I lean'd my back unto an aik,
 I thocht it was a trustie tree;
 But first it bow'd and syne it brak—
 Sac my true Love did lichtlie me.

O waly, waly, gin love be bonnie,
 A little time while it is new!
 But when 'tis auld it waxeth cauld,
 And fades awa' like morning dew.

O wherefore should I busk my heid,
 Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
 For my true Love has me forsook,
 And says he'll never lo'e me mair.

Now Arthur's Seat sall be my bed,
 The sheets sall ne'er be 'fild by me;
 Saint Anton's well sall be my drink;
 Since my true Love has forsaken me.

Marti'mas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
 And shake the green leaves off the tree?
 O gentle death, when wilt thou come?
 For of my life I am wearie.

'Tis not the frost, that freezes fell,
 Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie,
 'Tis not sic cauld that makes me cry;
 But my Love's heart grown cauld to me.

When we cam' in by Glasgow town,
We were a comely sicht to see;
My Love was clad in the black velvet,
And I mysel' in cramasie.

But had I wist, before I kist,
That love had been sae ill to win,
I had lock'd my heart in a case o' gowd,
And pinn'd it wi' a siller pin.

And O! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee;
And I mysel' were dead and gane,
And the green grass growing over me!

XI

Helen of Kirconnell

I wish I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
O that I were where Helen lies,
On fair Kirconnell lea!

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
And curst the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
And died to succour me!

O think na ye my heart was sair,
When my Love dropp'd and spak nae mair
There did she swoon wi' meikle care,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

As I went down the water-side,
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide,
On fair Kirconnell lea;

I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hacked him in pieces sma',
I hacked him in pieces sma',
For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare!
I'll mak a garland o' thy hair,
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
Until the day I dee!

O that I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
Says, "Haste and come to me!"

O Helen fair, O Helen chaste!
If I were with thee, I were blest,
Where thou lies low, and taks thy rest,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish my grave were growing green,
A winding-sheet drawn owre my e'en,
And I in Helen's arms lying,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
And I am weary of the skies,
For her sake that died for me.

XII

Edward

"WHY does your brand sac drop wi' blude,
Edward, Edward?
Why does your brand sac drop wi' blude,
And why sac sad gang ye, O?"

"O I hae kill'd my hawk sae gude,
Mither, mither;
O I hae kill'd my hawk sae gude,
And I had nae mair but he, O."

"Your hawk's blude was never sae red,
Edward, Edward;
Your hawk's blude was never sae red,
My dear son, I tell thee, O."

"O I hae kill'd my red-roan steed,
Mither, mither;
O I hae kill'd my red-roan steed,
That erst was sae fair and free, O."

"Your steed was auld, and ye hae got mair,
Edward, Edward;
Your steed was auld, and ye hae got mair;
Some other dule ye dree, O."

"O I hae kill'd my father dear,
Mither, mither;
O I hae kill'd my father dear,
Alas, and wae is me, O."

"And whatten penance will ye dree for that,
Edward, Edward?
Whatten penance will ye dree for that?
My dear son, now tell me, O."

"I'll set my feet in yonder boar,
Mither, mither;
I'll set my feet in yonder boat,
And I'll fare over the sea, O."

"And what will ye do wi' your tow'rs and your ha',
Edward, Edward?
And what will ye do wi' your tow'rs and your ha',
That was sae fair to see, O?"

"I'll let them stand till they doun fa',
Mither, mither;
I'll let them stand till they doun fa',
For here never mair maun I be, O."

"And what will ye leave to your bairns and your wife,
Edward, Edward?
And what will ye leave to your bairns and your wife,
When ye gang owre the sea, O?"

"The world's room: let them beg through life,
Mither, mither;
The world's room: let them beg through life;
For them never mair will I see, O."

"And what will ye leave to your ain mither dear,
Edward, Edward?
And what will ye leave to your ain mither dear,
My dear son, now tell me, O?"

"The curse of hell frae me sall ye bear,
Mither, mither;
The curse of hell frae me sall ye bear;
Sic counsels ye gave to me, O."

XIII

Sweet William and May Margret

THERE came a ghost to Margret's door,
With many a grievous groan;
And aye he tirl'd at the pin,
But answer made she none.

"Is that my father Philip?
Or is't my brother John?
Or is't my true-love Willie,
From Scotland new come home?"

"'Tis not thy father Philip,
Nor yet thy brother John,
But 'tis thy true-love Willie,
From Scotland new come home.

"O sweet Margret, O dear Margret,
I pray thee speak to me;
Give me my faith and troth, Margret,
As I gave it to thee."

"Thy faith and troth thou's never get,
Nor yet will I thee lend,
Till that thou come within my bower
And kiss me cheek and chin."

"If I shou'd come within thy bower,
I am no earthly man;
And shou'd I kiss thy ruby lips,
Thy days would not be lang.

"O sweet Margret, O dear Margret,
I pray thee speak to me;
Give me my faith and troth, Margret,
As I gave it to thee."

"Thy faith and troth thou's never get,
Nor yet will I thee lend,
Till thou take me to yon kirk-yard,
And wed me with a ring."

"My bones are buried in yon kirk-yard
Afar beyond the sea;
And it is but my spirit, Margret,
That's now speaking to thee."

She stretched out her lily-white hand,
And, for to do her best;
"Hae, there's your faith and troth, Willie,
God send your soul good rest."

Now she has kilted her robes of green
A piece below her knec,
And a' the live-lang winter night
The dead corp followed she.

"Is there any room at your head, Willie,
Or any room at your feet?
Or any room at your side, Willie,
Wherein that I may creep?"

"There's nae room at my head, Margret,
There's nae room at my feet;
There's nae room at my side, Margret,
My coffin's made so meet."

Then up and crew the red, red cock
And up and crew the grey;
"Tis time, 'tis time, my dear Margret,
That you were gane away."

XIV

The Bonny Earl of Murray

YE Highlands and ye Lowlands,
O where hae ye been?
They hae slain the Earl of Murray,
And hae laid him on the green.

Now wae be to thee, Huntley,
And wherefore did you sae?
I bade you bring him wi' you,
But forbade you him to slay.

He was a braw gallant,
And he rid at the ring;
And the bonny Earl of Murray,
O he might hae been a king!

He was a braw gallant,
And he play'd at the ba';
And the bonny Earl of Murray
Was the flower among them a'!

He was a braw gallant,
And he play'd at the glove;
And the bonny Earl of Murray,
He was the queen's luvie!

O lang will his Lady
Look owre the Castle Downe,
Ere she see the Earl of Murray
Come sounding through the town.

XV

The Death of Admiral Benbow

Come all you sailors bold,
Lend an ear,
'Come all you sailors bold,
Lend an ear;
'Tis of our Admiral's fame,
Brave Benbow called by name,
How he fought on the main
You shall hear.

Brave Benbow he set sail
For the fight,
Brave Benbow he set sail
For to fight:
Brave Benbow he set sail,
With a fine and pleasant gale,
But his captains they turned tail
In a fight.

'Twas the *Ruby* and *Noah's Ark*
Fought the French,
'Twas the *Ruby* and *Noah's Ark*
Fought the French;
And there was ten in all,
Poor souls they fought them all,
They recked them not at all
Nor their noise.

It was our Admiral's lot,
With a chain-shot,
It was our Admiral's lot,
With a chain-shot
Our Admiral lost his legs,
And to his men he begs
"Fight on, my boys," he says,
"Tis my lot."

While the surgeon dressed his wounds,
Thus he said,
While the surgeon dressed his wounds,
Thus he said:
"Let my cradle now in haste,
On the quarter-deck be placed,
That the Frenchmen I may face,
Till I'm dead."

And there bold Benbow lay,
Crying out,
And there bold Benbow lay,
Crying out:
"Oh let us tack once more,
We'll drive them to the shore,
As our fathers did before
Long ago."

XVI

Widdecombe Fair

"TOM PEARSE, Tom Pearse, lend me your gray mare,"

All along, down along, out along, lee.

"For I want for to go to Widdecombe Fair,

Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,

Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all."

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

"And when shall I see again my gray mare?"

All along, down along, out along, lee.

"By Friday soon, or Saturday noon,

Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,

Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all."

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

Then Friday came and Saturday noon,

All along, down along, out along, lee.

But Tom Pearse's old mare hath not trotted home,

Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,

Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

So Tom Pearse he got up to the top of the hill,

All along, down along, out along, lee.

And he seed his old mare down a-making her will,

Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,

Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

So Tom Pearse's old mare her took sick and her died,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
And Tom he sat down on a stone, and he cried
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

But this isn't the end o' this shocking affair,
All along, down along, out along, lee.
Nor though they be dead, of the horrid career
Of Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley, and all.
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

When the wind whistles cold on the moor of a night,
All along, down along, out along, lee,
Tom Pearse's old mare doth appear, gashly white,
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

And all the night long he heard skirling and groans,
All along, down along, out along, lee,
From Tom Pearse's old mare in her rattling bones,
And from Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy,
Dan'l Whidden, Harry Hawk,
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.
Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

XVII

S. ROWLANDS

c. 1570-1630

SIR EGLAMOUR, that worthy knight,
He took his sword and went to fight:
And as he rode both hill and dale,
Armed upon his shirt of mail,
A dragon came out of his den,
Had slain, God knows how many men!

When he espied Sir Eglamour,
Oh, if you had but heard him roar,
And seen how all the trees did shake,
The knight did tremble, horse did quake,
The birds betake them all to peeping—
It would have made you fall a weeping!

But now it is in vain to fear,
Being come unto, "fight dog! fight bear!"
To it they go and fiercely fight,
A livelong day from morn till night.
The dragon had a plaguy hide,
And could the sharpest steel abide.

No sword will enter him with cuts,
Which vexed the knight unto the guts;
But, as in choler he did burn,
He watched the dragon a good turn;
And, as a yawning he did fall,
He thrust his sword in, hilts and all.

Then, like a coward, he to fly
Unto his den that was hard by;
And there all night he lay and roared.
The knight was sorry for his sword,
But, riding thence, said, "I forsake it,
He that will fetch it, let him take it!"

II

THE POET'S STORY

"It is in my heart that grown men are but as children in the matter of tales."

RUDYARD KIPLING

Preface to *Life's Handicap*

AFTER centuries of popularity, narrative poetry is now rather unjustly neglected. Partly, perhaps, because Anthologies are mainly Anthologies of Lyric Poetry, and the ordinary reader is not tempted to delve into the Collected Works of older poets until he knows what "discoveries" there are to be made. But narrative poetry demands little and gives much.

One reason for reading narrative poetry is that Chaucer wrote it—Chaucer with his zest for living and delight in things as they are; Chaucer with his genial humour and shrewdness, his daylight realism of description. "His words point as an index to the objects they refer to, like the eye or finger—alert, quick, direct", said Hazlitt. And Chaucer, as Hoccleve recognised nearly five hundred years ago, was "the first finder of our fair language", the first of our modern poets. I must confess to slipping in a few of the old, long lines from Langland's *Piers Plowman* partly as a foil for *The Canterbury Tales*; you can see the difference in a moment. The few of Chaucer's Pilgrims you will meet here can be appreciated without a clutter of footnotes. I have dismissed with regret those others of the twenty-nine who rode out with the poet and Mine Host of the Tabard towards Canterbury that fabled April morning: the Cook who made such good blanc-mange, the Merchant with his beaver hat of Flemish wood, the West Country skipper who was half-pirate, the Franklin with his beard white as a daisy. . . . But you will find them all in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, each a perfect character in little, an individual and a type. Of the Tales the Pilgrims told, *The Nun's Priest's* and *The Knight's Tale* are perhaps best for a beginning and show several sides of Chaucer's genius for story-telling.

With *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer established English narrative poetry for all time. Whatever your taste in a story, there is thereafter "God's plenty". If you like battle-pieces, there is Drayton's *Agincourt*, Scott's *Marmion*, Chesterton's glorious *Ballad of the White Horse*, and a host of others as spirited and

stirring. If your taste is for the supernatural, Drayton's *Nymphidia* offers a fairyland as entrancing as that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; there is Hogg's *Kilmeny*, or Coleridge's matchless *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which cannot be reprinted or re-read too often. For gusto, there is Burns with *Tam o' Shanter*, rollicking from start to finish; for drama, there is Browning; for realism, Crabbe, "Nature's sternest painter, yet her best", or Wordsworth's *Michael*, approaching perhaps as nearly as poetry can do, the language actually used by men, or Tennyson's surprise achievement, *Northern Farmer*. For satire, there are the biting character studies of Dryden and Pope, and *The Rape of the Lock*, the one poem Pope wrote which can truly be called delightful.

But, you may say, I like a story in prose. From poetry I expect something different, something prose cannot touch. Narrative poetry has many answers to that, too. The Ballad is one; *The Faerie Queene* another

*"Sweet Spenser moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's soft glory and the moon's slow pace",*

or Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*, with that "trembling delicate and snail-horn perception of beauty" through all the senses, or Rossetti's lyrical *Blessed Damozel*. Or there is the sublime splendour of Milton's two epics—language could go no higher—or that autobiographical revelation of the growth of a poet's mind, *The Prelude*, to me incomparably Wordsworth's greatest poem.

The history of narrative poetry has added greatly to its honours in our own time and no appreciation of modern verse is complete without a knowledge of it. *Dauber* and *Reynard the Fox*, the best of Masfield's narrative poems, are in the true succession of Chaucer. I hope you will go to the Collected Poems and read the whole of both, but the last act of *Dauber* can stand alone. No finer conclusion to a narrative poem has, perhaps, ever been written. And you will see here, too, how the English landscape of *Reynard the Fox* equals Shakespeare's own in the country pictures of *Venus and Adonis*.

XVIII

WILLIAM LANGLAND

1330?-1400

Piers Plowman

The beginning of the Visions

. . . on a may morwenyng · on · Malverne hilles
Me byfel for the slepe · for weyrynesse of wandryng;
And in a launde as ich lay · lenede Ich and slepte,
And marveylously me mette · as ich may yow telle;
Al the welthe of this worlde · and the woo bothe,
Wynkyng as it were · wyterly ich saw hyt,
Of truythe and tricherye · of tresoun and of gyle,
Al ich saw slepyng · as iche shal yow telle.
Esteward ich bylulde · after the sonne,
And sawe a toure, as ich trowede · Truth was ther-ynne;
Westwarde ich waitede · in a whyle after,
And sawe a deep dale · Deth as ich lyvede,
Woned in tho wones · and wyckede spiritus.
A fair feld ful of folke · fonde ich ther betwyne,
Alle manere of men · the mene and the ryche,
Worchynge and wondrynge · as the worlde asketh.
Somme putte hem to plow · and pleiden ful seylde,
In settyng and in sowyng · swonken ful harde,
And wonne that thuse wasters · with glotenye destroyeth.
Somme putte hem to pruyde · and parailede hem ther-after,
In contenaunce and in clothynge · in meny kynne gyse;
In praiers and in penaunces · putten hem manye,
All for the love of Oure Lorde · lyveden ful harde,
In hope to have a gode ende · and hevene-ryche blysse . . .

The Harrowing of Hell

A voys loude in that light · to Lucifer seide,
"Prince of the palys · prest undo the gates,
For here cometh with coroune · the kyng of alle glorie."
... "What lord art thou?" quath Lucifer; a voys aloude seyde,
"The lord of myght and of mayn · that made alle thynges.
Duke of this dymne place · a-non undo the gates,
That Crist mowe comen in · the kynges sone of hevene."
And with that breth helle brake · with all Beliales barres;
For eny wye other warde: wyde openede the gates.
Patriarkes and prophetes · *populus in tenebris*
Songen with Seint Johan · "Ecce agnus Dei!"

XIX

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

1340?-1400

*... and pilgrims were they alle,
That toward Canterbury wolden ryde.*

The Knight

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden (no man ferre)
As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse,
And ever honoured for his worthinesse. . . .
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for our feith at Tramissene
In listes thryes, and ay slayn his fo.

This ilkē worthy knight had been also
 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,
 Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:
 And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
 And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
 He never yet no vileinye ne sayde
 In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.
 He was a verray parfit gentil knight.
 But for to tellen yow of his array,
 His hors were gode, but he was nat gay.
 Of fustian he wered a gipoun
 Al bismotered with his habergeoun;
 For he was late y-come from his viage,
 And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.

The Squire

With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
 A lovyere, and a lusty bachelor,
 With lokkēs crulle, as they were leyd in presse.
 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
 And wonderly deliver, and grect of strengthe.
 And he had been somtyme in chivachye,
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,
 And born him wel, as of so litel space,
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
 Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
 Al ful of fresshē floures, whyte and rede.
 Singinge he was, or floytinge, al the day;
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his goun, with sleeves longe and wyde.
 Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
 He coude songes make and wel endyte,
 Juste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte.
 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
 He sleep namore than dooth a nightingale.

Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,
And earf biforn his fader at the table.

The Yeoman

A YEMAN hadde he, and servaunts namo
At that tyme, for him listē ryde so;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene;
A sheef of pecok-arwes brighte and kene
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily;
(Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly:
His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),
And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.
A not-beed hadde he, with a broun visage.
Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage.
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other syde a gay daggere,
Harneised wel, and sharp as point of spere;
A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene.
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.

The Prioress

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy:
Hir gretteste ooth was but by sēynt Loy;
And she was elcped madame Eglentyne.
Ful wel she song the service divyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.
At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle;
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
That no drope ne fille up-on hir brest.

In curteisye was set ful nuuche hir lest.
 Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,
 That in hir coppe was no ferthing sene
 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,
 And sikerly she was of grect disport,
 And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,
 And peyned hir to countrifete chere
 Of court, and been estatlich of manere,
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.
 But, for to speken of hir conscience,
 She was so charitable and so pitous,
 She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous
 Caught in a rrappe, if it were deed or bledde.
 Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde
 With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.
 But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,
 Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte:
 And al was conscience and tendre herte.
 Ful semely hir wimpel pinched was;
 Hir nose tretys; hir cyen greye as glas;
 Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed;
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
 It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;
 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
 Ful fetis was hir cloke, as I was war.
 Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene;
 And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene,
 On which ther was first write a crowned A,
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

Another NONNE with hir hadde she,
 That was hir chapeleyn, and PREESTES THREE.

The Clerk of Oxford

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,
 That un-to logik hadde longe y-go.

As lene was his hors as is a rake,
 And he nas nat right fat, I undertake;
 But loked holwe, and ther-to soberly.
 Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy;
 For he had geten him yet no benefyce,
 Ne was so worldly for to have offyce.
 For him was lever have at his beddes heed
 Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
 Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye.
 But al be that he was a philosophre,
 Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
 But al that he mighte of his freendes hente,
 On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,
 And bisily gan for the soules preye
 Of hem that yaf him wher-with to scoleye.
 Of studie took he most cure and most hede.
 Noght o word spak he more than was nede,
 And that was seyde in forme and reverence,
 And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence.
 Souninge in moral vertu was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

The Wife of Bath

A good Wyf was ther of bisyde BATHE,
 But she was som-del deaf, and that was scathe.
 Of clooth-making she hadde swiche an haunt,
 She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
 In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
 That to th' offring bifore hir sholde goon;
 And if ther dide, certeyn, so wrooth was she,
 That she was out of alle charitee.
 Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground;
 I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
 That on a Sonday were upon hir heed.
 Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
 Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos ful moiste and newe.

Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy woman al hir lyve,
Housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten other companye in youthe;
But therof nedeth nat to speke as nouthe.
And thryes hadde she been at Jerusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge streem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
In Galice at seint Jame, and at Coloigne.
She coude muche of wandring by the weye:
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Up-on an ambler esily she sat,
Y-wimpled wel, and on hir heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hir hipcs large,
And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felawship wel coude she laughe and carpe.
Of remedyes of love she knew perchaunce,
For she coude of that art the olde daunce.

The Parson

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre PERSON of a toun;
But riche he was of holy thoght and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parissheis devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient;
And swich he was y-preved ofte sythes,
Ful looth were him to cursen for his tythes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Un-to his povre parissheis aboute
Of his offring, and eek of his substaunce.
He coude in litel thing han suffisaunce.
Wyf was his parisshe, and houses fer a-sonder,
But he ne lasse nat, for reyn ne thonder,

In siknes nor in meschief, to visyte
 The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lyte,
 Up-on his feet, and in his hand a staf.
 This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
 That first he wroughte, and afterward he taughte;
 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
 And this figure he added eek ther-to,
 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
 For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
 No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
 And shame it is, if a preest take keep,
 A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
 Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
 By his clenness, how that his sheep shold live.
 He sette nat his benefice to hyre,
 And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
 And ran to London, un-to sēynt Poules,
 To seken him a chaunterie for soules,
 Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
 So that the wolf ne made it nat miscarie;
 He was a shepherde and no mercenarie.
 And though he holy were, and vertuous,
 He was to sinful man nat despitous,
 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
 But in his teching discreet and benigne.
 To drawen folk to heven by fairnesse
 By good ensample, was his bisnesse:
 But it were any persone obstinat,
 What-so he were, of heigh or lowe estat,
 Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.
 A better preest, I trowe that nowher noon is.
 He wayted after no pompe and reverence,
 Ne maked him a spyced conscience,
 But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
 He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve.

The Ploughman

With him ther was a *FLOWMAN*, was his brother,
That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother,
A trewe swinker and a good was he,
Livinge in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his hole herte
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
He wolde thresshe, and ther-to dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hyre, if it lay in his might.
His tythes payed he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swink and his catel.
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.

The Miller

The *MILLER* was a stout carl, for the nones,
Ful big he was of braun, and eek of bones;
That proved wel, for over-al ther he cam,
At wrastling he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre,
Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it, at a renning, with his heed.
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And ther-to brood, as though it were a spade.
Up-on the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and ther-on stood a tuft of heres,
Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres;
His nose-thirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde;
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.
He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
And that was most of sinne and harlotryes.
Wel coude he stelen corn, and tollen thryes;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whyt cote and a blew hood wered he.

A baggepype wel coude he blowe and sowne,
And ther-with-al he broghte us out of towne.

The Reeve \

The REVE was a sclendre colerik man,
His berd was shave as ny as ever he can.
His heer was by his cres round y-shorn.
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-senc.
Wel coude he kepe a gerner and a binne;
Ther was noon auditour coude on him winne.
Wel wiste he, by the droghte, and by the reyn,
The yelding of his seed, and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,
Was hoolly in this reves governing,
And by his covenaut yaf the rekening.
Sin that his lord was twenty yeer of age;
Ther coude no man bringe him in arrerage.
Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne other hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of him, as of the deeth.
His woning was ful fair up-on an heeth,
With grene trecēs shadwed was his place.
He coude bettre than his lord purchase.
Ful riche he was astored prively,
His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene him of his owne good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he lerned hadde a good mister;
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This reve sat up-on a ful good stot,
That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers up-on he hade,
And by his syde he bar a rusty blade.

Of Northfolk was this reve, of which I telle,
Bisyde a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
Tukked he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And ever he rood the hindreste of our route.

A Word from the Author

Now have I told you shortly, in a clause,
Th'estat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this companye
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye,
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we baren us that ilke night,
Whan we were in that hostelrye alight.
And after wol I telle of our viage,
And al the remenaunt of our pilgrimage.
But first I pray yow, of your curteisye,
That ye n'arette it nat my vilcinye,
Thogh that I pleyntly speke in this matere,
To telle yow hir wordes and hir chere;
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes properly.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce, as ny as ever he can,
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;
Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thing, or finde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, al-thogh he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak him-self ful brode in holy writ,
And wel ye woot, no vilcinye is it.
Eek Plato seith, who-so that can him rede,
The wordes mote be cosin to the dede.
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree

Here in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

A suggestion from the Host

Greet chere made our hoste us everichon,
And to the soper sette us anon;
And served us with vitaille at the beste.
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drinke us leste.
A semely man our hoste was with-alle
For to han been a marshal in an halle;
A large man he was with eyen stepe,
A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe :
Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel y-taught,
And of manhod him lakkede right naught.
Eek therto he was right a mery man,
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of mirthe amonges othere thinges,
Whan that we hadde maad our rekeninges;
And seyde thus: "Now, lordinges, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome hertely:
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I ne saugh this yeer so mery a companye
At ones in this herberwe as is now.
Fayn wolde I doon yow mirthe, wiste I how.
And of a mirthe I am right now bithoght,
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.

Ye goon to Caunterbury; God yow spede,
The blisful martir quyte yow your mede.
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
For trewely, comfort ne mirthe is noon
To ryde by the weye doumb as a stoon;
And therefore wol I maken yow disport,
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
And if yow lyketh alle, by oon assent,
Now for to stonden at my jugement,

And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
To-morwe, whan ye ryden by the weye,
Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,
But ye be merye, I wol yeve yow myn heed.
Hold up your hond, withouten more speche."

Our counseil was nat longe for to seche;
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted him withouten more avys,
And bad him seye his verdit, as him leste.

"Lordinges," quod he, "now herkneþ the bestic;
But tak it not, I prey yow, in desdeyn;
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn.
That ech of yow, to shorte with your weye,
In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,
To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And hom-ward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventures that whylom han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth him best of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this eas
Tales of best sentence and most solas,
Shal have a soper at our aller cost
Here in this place, sitting by this post,
Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And for to make yow the more mery,
I wol my-selven gladly with yow ryde,
Right at myn owne cost, and be your gyde.
And who-so wol my jugement withseye
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, with-outen wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore."

This thing was graunted, and our othes swore
With ful glad herte, and preyden him also
That he wold vouche-sauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been our governour,
And of our tales juge and reportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn prys;

And we wold reuled been at his devys,
In heigh and lowe; and thus, by oon assent,
We been acorded to his jugement.
And ther-up-on the wyn was fet anon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
With-outen any lenger tarynge.

And forth we rode

A-morwe, whan that day bigan to springe,
Up roos our host, and was our aller cok,
And gadrede us togidre, alle in a flok,
And forth we riden, a litel more than pas,
Un-to the watering of seint Thomas.
And there our host bigan his hors areste,
And seyde: "Lordinges, herkneth, if yow leste.
Ye woot your forward, and I it yow recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song acorde,
Lat see now who shal telle the firste tale.
As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,
Who-so be rebel to my jugement
Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twinne;
He which that hath the shortest shal biginne.
Sire knight," quod he, "my maister and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady prioresse;
And ye, sir clerk, lat be your shamfastnesse,
Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man."
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And shortly for to tellen, as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knight,
Of which ful blythe and glad was every wight;
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By forward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this gode man saugh it was so,

As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his forward by his free assent,
He seyde: "Sin I shal beginne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."

And with that word we riden forth our weye;
And he bigan with right a mery chere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.

*Here endeth the prolog of this book; and here biginneth the first tale,
which is the Knightes Tale.*

XX

The Knight's Tale

(Palamon and Arcite, two young knights captured in battle, see Emily
from the window of their prison in the tower)

AND in a tour, in angwish and in wo,
Dwellen this Palamoun and eek Arcite,
For evermore, ther may no gold hem quyte.
This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Til it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
Than is the lilic upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe—
For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,
I noot which was the fairer of hem two—
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,
She was arisen, and al redy dight;
For May wol have no slogardye a-night.
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his sleep to sterte,
And seith, "Arys, and do thyn observaunce."
This maked Emelye have remembraunce
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
Y-clothed was she fresh, for to devyse;

Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,
 Bihinde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.
 And in the gardin, at the sonne up-riste,
 She walketh up and down, and as hir liste
 She gadereth floures, party whyte and rede,
 To make a sotil gerland for hir hede,
 And as an aungel hevenly she song.
 The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
 Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,
 (Ther-as the knightes weren in prisoun,
 Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal)
 Was evene joynant to the gardin-wal,
 Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyinge.
 Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morweninge,
 And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
 As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
 Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,
 In which he al the noble citee seigh,
 And eek the gardin, ful of braunches grene,
 Ther-as this fresshe Emelye the shene
 Was in hir walk, and romed up and down.
 This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,
 Goth in the chambre, roming to and fro,
 And to him-self compleyning of his wo;
 That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, "alas!"
 And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
 That thurgh a window, thikke of many a barre
 Of yren greet, and square as any sparre,
 He caste his eye upon Emelya,
 And ther-with-al he bleynte, and cryde "a!"
 As though he stongen were un-to the herte.
 And with that cry Arcite anon up-sterre,
 And seyde, "Cosin myn, what eyleth thee,
 That art so pale and deedly on to see?
 Why crydestow? who hath thee doon offence?
 For Goddes love, tak al in pacience
 Our prisoun, for it may non other be;

Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun,
Hath yeven us this, al-though we hadde it sworn;
So stood the heven whan that we were born;
We moste endure it : this is the short and pleyn."
This Palamon answerde, and seyde agcyn,

"Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thou hast a veyn imaginacioun.
This prison caused me nat for to crye.
But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn yē
In-to myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of that lady that I see
Yond in the gardin romen to and fro,
Is cause of al my crying and my wo.
I noot wher she be womman or goddesse;
But Venus is it, soothly, as I gesse."
And ther-with-al on kneēs down he fil,
And seyde : "Venus, if it be thy wil
Yow in this gardin thus to transfigure
Bifore me, sorweful wrecche creature,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scapen.
And if so be my destinee be shapen
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
Of our linage have som compassioun,
That is so lowe y-broght by tyrannye."
And with that word Arcite gan espyc
Wher-as this lady romed to and fro.
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte him so,
That, if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as muche as he, or more.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously:
"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodenly
Of hir that rometh in the yonder place;
And, but I have hir mercy and hir grace,
That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,
I nam but deed; ther nis namore to seye."

Arcite, escaped from his prison, meets in the wood with Palamon, who had been freed and caged and had returned in disguise to Thebes. Duke Theseus comes upon them fighting to the death for love of Emily, and having lent ear to their story and the pleading of the ladies, says the case must be decided in the lists.

Greet was the feste in Athenes that day,
And eek the lusty seson of that May
Made every wight to been in swich plesaunce,
That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
And spenden it in Venus heigh servyse
But by the cause that they sholde ryse
Erly, for to seen the grete fight,
Unto hir reste wente they at night
And on the morwe, whan that day gan springe,
Of hors and harneys, noyse and clateringe
Ther was in hostelryes al aboute;
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes, up-on stedes and palfreys.
Ther mystow seen devysing of herneys
So uncouth and so riche, and wroght so weel
Of goldsmithrie, of browding, and of steel;
The sheeldes brighte, testers, and trappures;
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberks, cote-armures;
Lordes in paraments on hir courseres,
Knightes of retenue, and eek squyeres
Nailinge the speres, and helmes bokelinge,
Gigginge of sheeldes, with^layneres lacinge;
Ther as need is, they weren no-thing ydel;
The fomy stedes on the golden brydel
Gnawinge, and faste the armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikinge to and fro;
Yemen on fote, and communes many oon
With shorte staves, thikke as they may goon;
Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,
That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;
The paleys ful of peples up and down,
Heer three, ther ten, holding hir questioun,

Divyninge of thise Theban knightes two.
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde it shal be so;
Somme helden with him with the blake berd
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke-herd;
Somme sayde, he loked grim and he wolde fighte;
He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte,
Thus was te halle ful of divyninge,
Longe after that the sonne gan to springe.

(Arcite is dealt a mortal wound by Palamon)

And certeinly, ther nature wol nat wirche,
Far-wel, phisyk! go ber the man to chirche!
This al and som, that Arcita mot dye,
For which he sendeth after Emelye,
And Palamon, that was his cosin dere;
Than seyde he thus, as ye shul after here.
"Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o poynt of alle my sorwes smerte
To yow, my lady, that I love most;
But I biquethe the service of my gost
To yow aboven every creature,
Sin that my lyf may no lenger dure.
Allas, the wo! alas, the peynes stronge,
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deeth! alas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departing of our companye!
Allas, myn hertes quene! alas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? what asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone, with-outen any companye.
Far-wel, my swete fo! myn Emelye!
And softe tak me in your armes tweye,
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.

I have heer with my cosin Palamon
Had stryf and rancour, many a day a-gon,
For love of yow, and for my jelousye.

And Jupiter so wis my soule gve,
 To speken of a servant proprely,
 With alle circumstaunces trewely,
 That is to sevn, trouthe, honour, and knighthede,
 Wisdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kinrede,
 Fredom, and al that longeth to that art,
 So Jupiter have of my soule part,
 As in this world right now ne knowe I non
 So worthy to ben loved as Palamon,
 That serveth yow, and wol don al his luf
 And if that ever ye shul been a wyf,
 Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man "
 And with that word his speche faille gan
 For from his feet up to his brest was come
 The cold of deeth, that hadde him overcome
 And yet more-over, in his armes two
 The vital strengthe is lost, and al ago
 Only the intellect, with-uten more,
 That dwelled in his herte syk and sore,
 Gan failen, when the herte felte deeth,
 Dusked his eyen two, and failed breeth
 But on his lady yet caste he his ye;
 His laste word was, "mercy, Emelye!"
 His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther,
 As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher. . .

Infinite been the sorwes and the teres
 Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeres,
 In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban,
 For him ther wepeth bothe child and man;
 So greet a weping was ther noon, certayn,
 Whan Ector was y-broght, al fresh y-slayn,
 To Troye; allas! the pitee that was ther,
 Cracchung of chekes, rending eek of heer.
 "Why woldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,
 "And haddest gold y-nough, and Emelye?"
 No man mighte gladden Theseus,
 Savinge his olde fader Egeus,

That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he had seyn it chaungen up and down,
Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse :
And shewed hem ensamples and lyknesse.

"Right as ther deyed never man," quod he,
"That he ne livede in erthe in som degree,
Right so ther livede never man," he seyde,
"In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.
This world nis but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we ben pilgrimes, passinge to and fro;
Deeth is an ende of every worldly sore."
And over al this yet seyde he muchel more
To this effect, ful wysly to enhorten
The peple, that they sholde hem reconforte.

(The philosophic words of his father and the passage of time work their effect on the Duke, and Palamon is given Emily's hand in marriage)

"Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,
With al th'avys heer of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon, your owne knight,
That serveth yow with wille, herte, and might,
And ever hath doon, sin that ye first him knewe,
That ye shul, of your grace, up-on him rewe,
And taken him for housbonde and for lord:
Leen me your hand, for this is our acord.
Lat see now of your wommanly pitee.
He is a kinges brother sone," pardee;
And, though he were a povre bachelor,
Sin he hath served yow so many a yeer,
And had for yow so greet adversitee,
It moste been considered, leveth me;
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."

Than seyde he thus to Palamon ful right;
"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermoning
To make yow assente to this thing.
Com neer, and tak your lady by the hond."
Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond,

That highte matrimoine or mariage,
 By al the counseil and the baronage.
 And thus with alle blisse and melodye
 Hath Palamon y-wedded Emelye.
 And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
 Sende him his love, that hath it dere a-boght.
 For now is Palamon in alle wele,
 Living in blisse, in richesse, and in hele;
 And Emelye him loveth so tendrely,
 And he hir serveth al-so gentilly,
 That never was ther no word hem bitwene
 Of jelousye, or any other tene.
 Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;
 And God save al this faire companye!—Amen.

Here is ended the Knightes Tale.

XXI

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

A POVRE widwe, somdel stape in age,
 Was whylom dwelling in a narwe cotage,
 Bisyde a grove, standing in a dale.
 This widwe, of which I telle yow my tale,
 Sin thilke day that she was last a wyf,
 In pacience ladde a ful simple lyf,
 For litel was her catel and hir rente;
 By housbondrye, of such as God hir sente,
 She fond hir-self, and eek hir doghtren two.
 Three large sowes hadde she, and namo,
 Three kyn, and eek a sheep that highte Malle.
 Ful sooty was hir bour, and eek hir halle,
 In which she eet ful many a sclendre meel.
 Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.
 No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte;
 Hir dyete was accordant to hir cote.
 Repleccioun ne made hit never syk;

Attemprece dycte was al hir phisyk,
And exerceyse, and hertes suffisaunce.
The goute lette hir no-thing for to daunce,
N'apoplexye shiente nat hir heed;
No wyn ne drank she, neither whyt ne reed;
Hir bord was served most with whyt and blak,
Milk and broun bredd, in which she fond no lak,
Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or twecy,
For she was as it were a maner deye.

A yerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute
With stikkes, and a drye dich with-oute,
In which she hadde a cok, hight Chauntecleer,
In al the land of crowing nas his peer.
His vois was merier than the mery orgon
On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon;
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his logge,
Than is a klokke, or an abbey orlogge.
By nature knew he ech ascencioun
Of equinoxial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,
Thanne crew he, that it mighte nat ben amended.
His comb was redder than the fyn coral,
And batailed, as it were a castel-wal.
His bile was blak, and as the leet it shoon;
Lyk asur were his legges, and his toon;
His nayles whytter than the lilic flour,
And lyk the burned gold was his colour.
This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce
Sevene hennys, for to doon al his plesaunce,
Which were his sustres and his paramours,
And wonder lyk to him, as of colours.
Of whiche the faireste hewed on hir throte
Was cleped faire damoysele Pertelote.
Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire,
And compaignable, and bar hir-self so faire,
Sin thilke day that she was seven night old,
That trewely she hath the herte in hold

Of Chauntecleer loken in every² lili;
He loved hir so, that wel was him therwith.
But such a loye was it to here hem singe,
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to springe,
In swete accord, "my lief is faren in londe."
For thilke tyme, as I have understonde,
Bestes and briddes coude speke and singe.

And so bifel, that in a daweninge,
As Chauntecleer among his wyves alle.
Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,
And next him sat this faire Pertelote,
This Chauntecleer gan gronen in his throte,
As man that in his dreem is drecched sore.
And whan that Pertelote thus herde him rore,
She was agast, and seyde, "O herte dere,
What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere?
Ye been a verray sleper, fy for shame!"
And he answerde and seyde thus, "madame,
I pray yow, that ye take it nat a-grief:
By god, me mette I was in swich meschief
Right now, that yet myn herte is sore afright.
Now god," quod he, "my swevene recche aright,
And keep my body out of foul prisoun!
Me mette, how that I romed up and down
Withinne our yerde, wher-as I saugh a beste,
Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areste
Upon my body, and wolde han had me deed.
His colour was bitwixe yelwe and reed;
And tipped was his tail, and bothe his eres,
With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heres;
His snowte smal, with glowinge eyen tweye.
Yet of his look for fere almost I deye;
This caused me my groning, doutelees."

"Avoy!" quod she, "fy on yow, hertelees!
Allas!" quod she, "for, by that god above,
Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love;
I can nat love a coward, by my feith.

For certes, what so any womman seith,
 We alle desyren, if it mighte be,
 To han housbondes hardy, wyse, and free,
 And secree, and no nigard, ne no fool,
 Ne him that is agast of every tool,
 Ne noon avauntour, by that god above!
 How dorste ye seyn for shame unto your love,
 That any thing mighte make yow aferd?
 Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?
 Allas! and conne ye been agast of swevenis?
 No-thing, god wot, but vanitee, in sweven is.
 Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,
 And ofte of fume, and of complecciouns,
 Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.
 Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-night,
 Cometh of the grete superfluitee
 Of youre rede *colera*, *pardee*,
 Which causeth folk to dreden in here dremes
 Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes,
 Of grete bestes, that they wol hem byte,
 Of kontek, and of whelpes grete and lyte;
 Right as the humour of malencolye
 Causeth ful many a man, in sleep, to crye,
 For fere of blake beres, or boles blake,
 Or elles, blake develes wole hem take.
 Of othere humours coude I telle also,
 That werken many a man in sleep ful wo;
 But I wol passe as lightly as I can.

Lo Catoun, which that was so wys a man,
 Seyde he nat thus, ne do no fors of dremes?
 Now, sire,' quod she, 'whan we flee fro the bemes,
 For Goddes love, as tak som laxatyf;
 Up peril of my soule, and of my lyf,
 I counseille yow the beste, I wol nat lye,
 That bothe of colere and of malencolye
 Ye purge yow; and for ye shul nat tarie,
 Though in this toun is noon apotecarie,

I shal my-self to herbes techen yow,
 That shul ben for your hele, and for your prow;
 And in our yerd tho herbes shal I finde,
 The whiche han of hir propretee, by kinde,
 To purgen yow binethe, and eek above.
 Forget not this, for goddes owene love!
 Ye been ful colerik of compleccioun.
 Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
 Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hote;
 And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote,
 That ye shul have a fevere terciace,
 Or an agu, that may be youre bane.
 A day or two ye shul have digestyves
 Of wormes, er ye take your laxatyves,
 Of lauriol, centaure, and fumetere,
 Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there,
 Of catapuce, or of gaytres beryis,
 Of erbe yve, growing in our yerd, that mery is;
 Pekke hem up right as they growe, and etc hem in.
 Be mery, housbond, for your fader kin!
 Dredeth no dreem; I can say yow na-more."

"Madame," quod he, "*graunt mercy* of your lore.
 But nathelees, as touching daun Catoun,
 That hath of wisdom such a greet renoun,
 Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,
 By god, men may in olde bokes rede
 Of many a man, more of auctoritee
 Than ever Catoun was, so mote I thee,
 That al the revers seyn of his sentence,
 And han wel founden by experience,
 That dremes ben significaciouns,
 As wel of loye as tribulaciouns
 That folk enduren in this lyf present.
 Ther nedeth make of this noon argument;
 The verray preve sheweth it in dede.

Oon of the grettteste auctours that men rede
 Seith thus, that whylom two felawes wente /

On pilgrimage, in a ful good entente;
And happed so, thay come into a toun,
Wher-as ther was swich congregacioun
Of peple, and eek so streit of herbergage,
That they ne founde as muche as o cotage,
In which they bothe mighte y-logged be.
Wherfor thay mosten, of neccssitee,
As for that night, departen compaignye;
And ech of hem goth to his hostelrye,
And took his logging as it wolde falle.
That oon of hem was logged in a stalle,
Fer in a yerd, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was logged wel y-nough,
As was his aventure, or his fortune,
That us governeth alle as in commune.

And so bifel, that, longe er it were day,
This man mette in his bed, ther-as he lay,
How that his felawe gan up-on him calle,
And seyde, "allas! for in an oxes stalle
This night I shal be mordred ther I lye.
Now help me, dere brother, er I dye;
In alle haste com to me," he sayde.
This man out of his sleep for fere abrayde;
But whan that he was wakned of his sleep,
He turned him, and took of this no keep;
Him thoughte his dreem nas but a vanitee.
Thus twyës in his sleping dremed he.
And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe
Cam, as him thoughte, and scide, "I am now slawe;
Bihold my bloody woundes, depe and wyde!
Arys up erly in the morwe-tyde,
And at the west gate of the toun," quod he,
"A carte ful of dong ther shaltow see,
In which my body is hid ful prively;
Do thilke carte aresten boldely.
My gold caused my mordre, sooth to sayn;"
And tolde him every poynt how he was slayn,

With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.
And truste wel, his dreem he fond ful trewe;
For on the morwe, as sone as it was day,
To his felawes in he took the way;
And whan that he cam to this oxes stalle,
After his felawe he bigan to calle.

The hostiler answered him anon,
And seyde, "sire, your felawe is agon,
As sone as day he wente out of the toun."
This man gan fallen in suspeciouun,
Remembring on his dremes that he mettc,
And forth he goth, no lenger wolde he lettc,
Unto the west gate of the toun, and fond
A dong-carte, as it were to donge lond,
That was arrayed in the same wyse
As ye han herd the dede man devyse;
And with an hardy herte he gan to crye
Vengeaunce and Iustice of this felonye:—
"My felawe mordred is this same night,
And in this carte he lyth gapinge upright.
I crye out on the ministres," quod he,
"That sholden kepe and reulen this citee;
Harrow! allas! her lyth my felawe slayn!"
What sholde I more un-to this tale sayn?
The peple out-sterre, and caste the cart to groundc,
And in the middel of the dong they founde
The dede man, that mordred was al newe.

O blisful god, that art so Iust and trewe!
Lo, how that thou biwreyest mordre alway!
Mordre wol out, that see we day by day.
Mordre is so wlatson and abhominable
To god, that is so Iust and resonable,
That he ne wol nat suffre it heled be;
Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or three,
Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun.
And right anoon, ministres of that toun
Han hent the carter, and so sore him pyned,

And eek the hostiler so sore engyned,
That thay biknewe hir wikkednesse anoon,
And were an-hanged by the nekke-boon.

Here may men seen that dremes been to drede . . .

. . . Now let us speke of mirthe, and stinte al this;

Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
Of o thing god hath sent me large grace;
For whan I see the beautee of your face,
Ye ben so scarlet-reed about your yën,
It maketh al my drede for to dyen;

For, also sikcr as *In principio*,

Mulier est hominis confusio;

Madame, the sentence of this Latin is—
Womman is mannes Ioye and al his blis.

For whan I fele a-night your softe syde,
Al-be-it that I may nat on you ryde,
For that our perche is maad so narwe, alas!
I am so ful of Ioye and of solas

That I defye bothe sweven and dream."

And with that word he fley down fro the beem,

For it was day, and cek his hennes alle;

And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,

For he had founde a corn, lay in the yerd.

Royal he was, he was namore aferd;

He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,

And trad as ofte, er that it was pryme.

He loketh as it were a grim leoun;

And on his toos he rometh up and down,

Him deynd not to sette his foot to grounde.

He chukketh, whan he hath a corn y-founde,

And to him rennen thanne his wyves alle.

Thus royal, as a prince is in his halle,

Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture;

And after wol I telle his aventure.

Whan that the month in which the world bigan,

That highte March, whan god first maked man,

Was complet, and [y]-passed were also,

Sin March bigun, thritty dayes and two,
 Bifel that Chauntecleer, in al his pryde,
 His seven wyves walking by his syde,
 Caste up his cyen to the bighte sonne,
 That in the signe of Taurus hadde y-ronne
 Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moie,
 And knew by kynde, and by noon other lore,
 That it was pryme, and crew with blisful stevene
 "The sonne," he sayde, "is clomben up on hevenc
 Fourty degrees and oon, and more, y-wis
 Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
 Herkneþ these blisful briddes how they singe,
 And see the fresshe floures how they springe,
 Ful is myn herte of revel and solas"
 But sodenly him fil a sorweful cas,
 For ever the latter end of Ioye is wo
 God woot that worldly Ioye is sone ago,
 And if a rethor coude faire endyte,
 He in a cronique sauflly nughte it wryte,
 As for a sovereyn notabiltee
 Now every wys man, lat him herkne me,
 This storie is al-so trewe, I undertake,
 As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,
 That wommen holde in ful gret reverence
 Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence
 A col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee,
 That in the grove hadde woned yeres threc,
 By heigh imaginacioun forn-cast,
 The same night thurgh-out the hegges brast
 Into the yerd, ther Chauntecleer the faire
 Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire,
 And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
 Til it was passed undern of the day,
 Wayting his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle,
 As gladly doon these homicydes alle,
 That in awayt liggen to mordre men.
 O false morderer, lurking in thy den!

O newe Scariot, newe Genilon!
 False dissimilour, O Greek Sinon,
 That broghtest Troye al outrelly to sorwe!
 O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe,
 That thou into that yerd flough fro the bemes!
 Thou were ful wel y-warned by thy dremes,
 That thilke day was perilous to thee.
 But what that god forwoot mot nedes be,
 After the opinion of certeyn clerkis.
 Witnesse on him, that any perfit clerk is,
 That in scole is grer altercacioun
 In this matere, and grect disputisoun,
 And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
 But I ne can not bulte it to the bren,
 As can the holy doctour Augustyn,
 Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardyn,
 Whether that goddes worthy forwiring
 Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thing,
 (Nedely clepe I simple necessitee);
 Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
 To do that same thing, or do it noght,
 Though god forwoot it, er that it was wrought;
 Or if his witing streyneth nevere a del
 But by necessitee condicionel.
 I wol not han to do of swich matere;
 My tale is of a cok, as ye may here,
 That took his counseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
 To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
 That he had met the dreem, that I yow tolde.
 Wommennes counseils been ful ofte colde;
 Wommannes counseil broghte us first to wo,
 And made Adam fro paradys to go,
 Ther-as he was ful mery, and wel at ese.
 But for I noot, to whom it mighte displese,
 If I counseil of wommen wolde blame,
 Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.
 Rede auctours, wher they trete of swich matere,

And what thay seyn of wommen ye may here.
Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
I can noon harm of no womman divyne.

Faire in the sond, to bathe hir merily,
Lyth Pertelote, and alle hir sustres by,
Agayn the sonne; and Chauntecleer so free
Song merier than the mermayde in the see;
For Phisiologus seith sikerly,
How that they singen wel and merily.
And so bifel that, as he caste his yē,
Among the wortes, on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.
No-thing ne liste him thanne for to crowe,
But cryde anon, "cok, cok," and up he sterte,
As man that was affrayed in his herte.
For naturelly a beest desyreth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,
Though he never erst had seyn it with his yē.

This Chauntecleer, whan he gan him espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, "Gentil sire, allas! wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am your freend?
Now certes, I were worse than a feend,
If I to yow wolde harm or vileinye.
I am nat come your counseil for tespye;
But trewely, the cause of my cominge
Was only for to herkne how that ye singe.
For trewely ye have as mery a stevene
As eny aungel hath, that is in hevene;
Therwith ye han in musik more felinge
Than hadde Boece, or any that can singe.
My lord your fader (god his soule blesse!)
And eek your moder, of hir gentillesse,
Han in myn hous y-been, to my gret ese;
And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plesce.
But for men speke of singing, I wol saye,
So mote I brouke wel myn eyen tweye,

Save yow, I herde never man so singe,
 As dide your fader in the morweninge;
 Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
 And for to make his voys the more strong,
 He wolde so peyne him, that with both his yēn
 He moste winke, so loude he wolde cryen,
 And stonden on his tiptoon ther-with-al,
 And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.
 And eek he was of swich discrecioun,
 That ther nas no man in no regioun
 That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.
 I have wel rad in daun Burnel the Asse,
 Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,
 For that a preestes sone yaf him a knock
 Upon his leg, whyl he was yong and nyce,
 He made him for to lese his benefyce.
 But certeyn, ther nis no comparisoun
 Bitwix the wisdom and discrecioun
 Of youre fader, and of his subtiltee.
 Now singeth, sire, for seinte Charitee,
 Let see, conne ye your fader countrefete?"
 This Chauntecleer his winges gan to bete,
 As man that coude his tresoun nat espye,
 So was he ravissed with his flaterye.

Allas! ye lordes, many a fals flatour
 Is in your courtes, and many a losengeour,
 That plesen yow wel more, by my feith,
 Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.
 Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterye;
 Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.

This Chauntecleer stood hye up-on his toos,
 Strecching his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,
 And gan to crowe loude for the nones;
 And daun Russel the fox sterte up at ones,
 And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer,
 And on his bak toward the wode him beer,
 For yet ne was ther no man that him sewed.

O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!
 Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
 Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dremes!
 And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
 O Venus, that art goddesse of plesunce,
 Sin that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
 And in thy service dide al his poweer,
 More for delyt, than world to multiplye,
 Why woldestow suffre him on thy day to dye?
 O Gaufred, dere mayster soverayn,
 That, whan thy worthy king Richard was slayn
 With shot, compleynedest his deth so sore,
 Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy lore,
 The Friday for to chyde, as diden ye?
 (For on a Friday soothly slayn was he.)
 Than wolde I shewe yow how that I coude pleyne
 For Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne.

Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun
 Was never of ladies inaad, whan Ilioun
 Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite sword,
 Whan he hadde hent king Priam by the berd,
 And slayn him (as saith us *Eneydos*),
 As maden alle the hennes in the clos,
 Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
 But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighete,
 Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
 Whan that hir housband hadde lost his lyf,
 And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage;
 She was so ful of torment and of rage,
 That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,
 And brende hir-selven with a stedfast herte.
 O woful hennes, right so cryden ye,
 As, whan that Nero brende the citee
 Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves,
 For that hir housbondes losten alle hir lyves;
 Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.
 Now wol I torne to my tale agayn:—

This sely widwe, and eek hir doghtres two,
 Herden thise hennnes crye and maken wo,
 And out at dores sterten they anoon,
 And syen the fox toward the grove goon,
 And bar upon his bak the cok away;
 And cryden, "Out! harrow! and weylaway!
 Ha, ha, the fox!" and after him they ran,
 And eek with staves many another man;
 Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
 And Malkin, with a distaf in hir hand;
 Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges
 So were they fered for berking of the dogges
 And shouting of the men and wimmen eke,
 They ronne so, hem thoughte hir herte breke.
 They yelleden as feendes doon in helle;
 The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;
 The gees for fere flowen over the trees;
 Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees;
 So hidous was the noyse, a! *benedicite!*
 Certes, he Jakke Straw, and his meynec,
 Ne made never shoutes half so shrille,
 Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille,
 As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
 Of bras thay broghten bemes, and of box,
 Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and pouped,
 And therwithal thay shryked and they houped;
 It semed as that heven sholde falle.
 Now, gode men, I pray yow herkneth alle!

Lo, how fortune turneth sodcinly
 The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!
 This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,
 In al his drede, un-to the fox he spak,
 And seyde, "sire, if that I were as ye,
 Yet sholde I seyn (as wis god helpe me),
 Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
 A verray pestilence up-on yow falle!
 Now am I come un-to this wodes syde,

Maugree your heed, the cok shal heer abyde;
 I wol him ete in feith, and that anon."—
 The fox answerde, "in feith, it shal be don," —
 And as he spak that word, al sodcinly
 This cok brak from his mouth deliverly,
 And heighe up-on a tree he fleigh anon.
 And whan the fox saugh that he was y-gon,
 "Allas!" quod he, "O Chauntecleer, alas!
 I have to yow," quod he, "y-doon trespass,
 In-as-muche as I maked yow aferd,
 Whan I yow hente, and broghte out of the yerd;
 But, sire, I dide it in no wikke entente;
 Com down, and I shal telle yow what I mente.
 I shal seye sooth to yow, god help me so."
 "Nay than," quod he, "I shrewe us bothe two,
 And first I shrewe my-self, bothe blood and bones,
 If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.
 Thou shalt na-more, thurgh thy flaterye,
 Do me to singe and winke with myn yē.
 For he that winketh, whan he sholde see,
 Al wilfully, god lar him never thee!"
 "Nay," quod the fox, "but god yeve him meschaunce,
 That is so undiscreet of governaunce,
 That Iangleth whan he sholde holde his pees."
 Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees,
 And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
 But ye that holden this tale a folye,
 As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
 Taketh the moralitee, good men.
 For seint Paul seith, that al that writen is,
 To our doctryne it is y-write, y-wis.
 Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.
 Now, gode god, if that it be thy wille,
 As seith my lord, so make us alle good men;
 And bringe us to his heighe blisse. Amen.

XXII

The Wife of Bath has no regrets(From the *Prologue to her Tale*)

BUT, lord Crist! whan it remembreth me
 Up-on my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
 It tikleth me aboute my herte rote,
 Unto this day it dooth my herte bote
 That I have had my world as in my tyme.

bote] good.

XXIII

ROBERT HENRYSON

1430?-1503?

Robene and Makyne

ROBENE sat on gude green hill,
 Keepand a flock of fe:
 Merry Makyne said him till,
 "Robene, thou rue on me;
 I haif thee luvit loud and still,
 Thir yearis two or three;
 My dule is dern bot gif thou dill,
 Doubtless but dreid I die."

Robene answerit, "Be the rude,
 Naething of lufe I knaw,
 Bot keepis my sheep under yon wud,
 Lo where they raik on raw;
 What was merrit thee in thy mude,
 Makyne, to me thou shaw;
 Or what is lufe, or to be lo'ed?
 Fain wald I leir that law."

"At luvis lair gif thou will leir,
Tak there ane a b c,
Be keynd, courteous, and fair of feir,
Wise, hardy, and free;
So that no danger do thee deir;
What dule in dern thou dree;
Press thee with pain at all power,
Be patient and privie."

Robene answerit her again,
"I wait nocht what is lufe;
Bot I haif marvel in certain
What makis thee this wanrufe;
The weddir is fair, and I am fain,
My sheep gois hale abuse;
An we wald play us in this plain,
They wald us baith reprove."

"Robene, tak tent unto my tale,
And work all as I rede,
And thou sall haif my hairt all haill,
Eke and my maidenheid.
Sen God sendis bote for bale,
And for murning remead,
In dern with thee bot gif I deal,
Doubtless I am bot deid.'

"Makyne, tomorne this ilka tide,
An ye will meet me here,
Peradventure my sheep may gang beside,
Whill we haif liggit full near;
Bot maugre haif I, an I bide
Fra they begin to steir;
What lyis on hairt I will nocht hide:
Makyne, than mak gude cheer.'

"Robene, thou rcivis me roif and rest;
I lufe bot thee alane."

"Makyne, adieu, the sun gois west,
The day is near hand gane."

"Robene, in dule I am so drest,
That lufe will be my bane."

"Ga, lufe, Makyne, wherever thou list,
For leman I lo'e nane."

"Robene, I stand in sic a styll,
I sich, and that full sair."

"Makyne, I haif been this while;
At hame God gif I were."

"My honey, Robene, talk ane while,
Gif thou will do na mair."

"Makyne, some other man beguile,
For hameward I will fare."

Robene on his wayis went,
As licht as leaf of tree;
Makyne murnit in her intent,
And trow'd him never to see.
Robene braid attour the bent;
Than Makyne cryit on hie,
"Now may thou sing, for I am shent!
What ailis lufe at me?"

Makyne went hame withouttin fail,
Full weary eftir couth weep;
Than Robene in a full fair dale
Assemblit all his sheep.
Be that some pairt Makynis ail
Outthrow his hairt coud creep;
He fallowit her fast there till assail,
And till her tuk gude keep.

“Abide, abide, thou fair Makyne,
A word for ony thing;
For all my lufe it sall be thine,
Withouttin depairting.
All hail thy heart till haif mine
Is all my coverting;
My sheep to-morne till houris nine
Will need of no keeping.”

“Robene, thou has heard sung and say,
In gestis and soteis auld,
The man that will nocht when he may
Sall haif nocht when he wald.
I pray to Jesu every day
Mot eke their cares cauld,
That first presses with thee to play,
Be firth, forest, or fauld.”

“Makyne, the nicht is soft and dry,
The weddir is warm and fair,
And the green wud richt near us by
To walk attour all where;
There may na janglour us espy,
That is to lufe contrair;
Therein, Makyne, baith ye and I
Unseen we may repair.”

“Robene, that warld is all away
And quite brocht till ane end,
And never again thereto, parfay,
Sall it be as thou weend;
For of my pain thou made it play,
And all is vain I spend;
As thou has done, so sall I say,
Morne on, I think to mend.”

"Makyne, the hope of all my heal,
My hairt on thee is set,
And evermair to thee be leal,
While I may lif but let;
Never to fail, as otheris feill,
What grace that ever I get."
"Robene, with thee I will nocht deal;
Adieu, for thus we met."

Makyne went hame blyth eneuch,
Attour the holtis hair;
Robene murnit, and Makyne leuch;
Scho sang, he sichit sair;
And so left him, baith wo and wreuch,
In dolour and in care,
Keepand his herd under a heuch,
Amangis the holtis hair.

XXIV

EDMUND SPENSER

1552-1599

From *The Faerie Queene*

Despair

Ere long they come, where that same wicked wight
His dwelling has, low in an hollow caue,
Farre vnderneath a craggie clift ypight,
Darke, dolefull, drearie, like a greedie graue,
That still for carrion carcases doth craue:
On top whereof aye dwelt the ghastly Owle,
Shrieking his balefull note, which euer draue
Farre from that haunt all other chearefull fowle;
And all about it wandering ghostes did waile and howle.

And all about old stockes and stubs of trees,
Whereon nor fruit, nor leafe was euer scene,
Did hang vpon the ragged rocky knees;
On which had many wretches hanged beene,
Whose carcases were scattered on the greene,
And throwne about the cliffs. Arriued there,
That bare-head knight for dread and dolefull teene,
Would faine haue fled, ne durst approchen neare,
But th'other forst him stay, and comforted in feare.

That darkesome caue they enter, where they find
That cursed man, low sitting on the ground,
Musing full sadly in his sullein mind;
His griesie lockes, long growen, and vnbound,
Disordred hong about his shoulders round,
And hid his face; through which his hollow cync
Lookt deadly dull, and stared as astound;
His raw-bone cheekes through penurie and pine,
Where shronke into his iawes, as he did neuer dine.

His garment nought but many ragged clouts,
With thornes together pind and patched was,
The which his naked sides he wrapt abouts;
And him beside there lay vpon the gras
A drearie corse, whose life away did pas,
All wallowd in his owne yet luke-warne blood,
That from his wound yet welled fresh alas;
In which a rustie knife fast fixed stood,
And made an open passage for the gushing flood.

Which piteous spectacle, approuing trew
The wofull tale that *Trenisan* had told,
When as the gentle Redcrosse knight did vew,
With fire zeale he burnt in courage bold,
Him to auenge, before his bloud were cold,

And to the villain said, Thou damned wight,
The author of this fact, we here behold,
What justice can but judge against thee right,
With thine owne bloud to price his bloud, here shed in sight?

What franticke fit (quoth he) hath thus distraught
Thee, foolish man, so rash a doome to giue?
What justice euer other judgement taught,
But he should die, who merites not to liue?
None else to death this man despayring driue,
But his owne guiltie mind deseruing death.
Is then vniust to each his due to giue?
Or let him die, that loatheth liuing breath?
Or let him die at ease, that liueth here vncath?

Who trauels by the wearie wandring way,
To come vnto his wished home in haste,
And meetes a flood, that doth his passage stay,
Is not great grace to helpe him ouer past,
Or free his feet, that in the myre sticke fast?
Most enuious man, that grieues at neighbours good,
And fond, that joyest in the woe thou hast,
Why wilt not let him passe, that long hath stood
/pon the banke, yet wilt thy selfe not passe the flood?

He there does now enjoy eternall rest
And happie ease, which thou doest want and craue,
And further from it daily wanderest:
What if some litle paine the passage haue,
That makes fraile flesh to feare the bitter waue?
Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease,
And layes the soul to sleepe in quiet graue?
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.

The knight much wondred at his suddaine wit,
And said, The terme of life is limited,
Ne may a man prolong, nor shorten it;

The souldier may not moue from watchfull sted,
Nor leaue his stand, vntill his Captaine bed
Who life did limit by almightie doome,
(Quoth he) knowes best the termes established;
And he, that points the Centonell his roome,
Doth licence him depart at sound of morning droome.

Is not his deed, what euer thing is donne,
In heauen and earth? did not he all create
To die againe? all ends that was begonne
Their times in his eternall booke of fate
Are written sure, and haue their certaine date.
Who then can strue with strong necessitie,
That holds the world in his still chaunging state,
Or shunne the death ordaynd by destinie?
When houre of death is come, let none aske whence, nor why

The lenger life, I wote the greater sin,
The greater sin, the greater punishment:
All those great battels, which thou boasts to win,
Through strife, and bloud-shed, and auengement,
Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent
For life must life, and bloud must bloud repay.
Is not enough thy euill life forespent?
For he, that once hath missed the right way,
The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray.

Then do no further goe, no further stray,
But here lie downe, and to thy rest betake,
Th'ill to preuent, that life ensewen may.
For what hath life, that may it loued make,
And giues not rather cause it to forsake?
Feare, sicknesse, age, losse, labour, sorrow, strife,
Paine, hunger, cold, that makes the hart to quake;
And euer fickle fortune rageth rife,
All which, and thousands mo do make a loathsome life.

Thou wretched man, of death hast greatest need,
If in true ballance thou wilt weigh thy state:
For neuer knight, that dared warlike deede,
More lucklesse disauentures did amate:
Witnessse the dongeon deepe, wherein of late
Thy life shut vp, for death so oft did call;
And though good lucke prolonged hath thy date,
Yet death then, would the like mishaps forestall,
Into the which hereafter thou maiest happen fall.

Why then doest thou, O man of sin, desire
To draw thy dayes forth to their last degrec?
Is not the measure of thy sinfull hire
High heaped vp with huge iniquitie,
Against the day of wrath, to burden thee?
Is not enough that to this Ladie milde
Thou falsed hast thy faith with periurie,
And sold thy selfe to serue *Duesa* vilde,
With whom in all abuse thou hast thy selfe defilde?

Is not he just, that all this doth behold
From highest heauen, and beares an equall eye?
Shall be thy sins vp in his knowledge fold,
And guiltie be of thine impietie?
Is not his law, Let euery sinner die:
Die shall all flesh? what then must needs be donne,
Is it not better to doe willinglie,
Then linger, till the glasse be all out ronne?
Death is the end of woes: die soone, O faeries sonne.

The Procession of Times and Seasons

So, forth issew'd the Seasons of the ycare;
 First, lusty *Spring*, all dight in leaues of flowres
 That freshly budded and new bloosmes did beare
 (In which a thousand birds had built their bowres
 That sweetly sung, to call forth Paramours):
 And in his hand a tauclm he did beare,
 And on his head (as fit for warlike stoures)
 A gult engrauen morion he did weare;
 That as some did him loue, so others did him feare.

Then came the jolly *Summer*, being dight
 In a thin silken cassock coloured greene,
 That was vnlyned all, to be more light:
 And on his head a girlond well bescene
 He wore, from which as he had chauffed been
 The sweat did drop; and in his hand he bore
 A boawe and shaftes, as he in forrest greene
 Had hunted late the Libbard or the Bore,
 And now would bathe his limbes, with labor heated sore.

Then came the *Autumne* all in yellow clad,
 As though he joyed in his plentious store,
 Laden with fruite that made him laugh, full glad
 That he had banisht hunger, which to-fore
 Had by the belly oft him pinched sore.
 Vpon his head a wreath that was enrold
 With eares of corne, of euery sort he bore:
 And in his hand a sickle he did holde,
 To reape the ripened fruits the which the earth had yold.

Lastly, came *Winter* cloathed all in frize,
 Chattering his teeth for cold that did him chill,
 Whil'st on his hoary beard his breath did freese;
 And the dull drops that from his purpled bill
 As from a limbeck did adown distill.

In his right hand a tipped staffe he held,
With which his feeble steps he stayed still:
For, he was faint with cold, and weak with eld;
That scarce his loosed limbes he hable was to weld.

These, marching softly, thus in order went,
And after them, the Monthes all riding came;
First, sturdy *March* with brows full sternly bent,
And armed strongly, rode vpon a Ram,
The same which ouer *Hellespontus* swam:
Yet in his hand a spade he also hent,
And in a bag all sorts of seeds ysame,
Which on the earth he strowed as he went,
And fild her womb with fruitfull hope of nourishment.

Next came fresh *Aprill* full of lustyhed,
And wanton as a Kid whose horne new buds:
Vpon a Bull he rode, the same which led
Europa floting through th' *Argolick* fluds:
His hornes were gilden all with golden studs
And garnished with garlonds goodly dight
Of all the fairest flowres and freshest buds
Which th'earth brings forth, and wet he seem'd in sight
With waues, through which he waded for his loues delight.

Then came faire *May*, the fayrest mayd on ground,
Deckt all with dainties of her seasons pryde,
And throwing flowres out of her lap around:
Vpon two brethrens shoulders she did ride,
The twinnes of *Leda*; which on eyther side
Supported her like to their soueraigne Queene.
Lord! how all creatures laught, when her they spide,
And leapt and daunc't as they had ravisht beene!
And *Cupid* selfe about her fluttred all in greene.

And after her, came jolly *June* arrayd
 All in greene leaues, as he a Plover were,
 Yet in his time, he wrought as well as plowd,
 That by his plough-vrons mote right well appeare:
 Vpon a Crib he rode, that him did beare
 With crooked crawling steps an vneouth pase,
 And backward yode, as Bargemen wont to fare
 Bending their force contrary to their face,
 Like that vragacious crew which fames demurest grace

Then came hot *Iuly* boyling like to fire,
 That all his garments he had east away
 Vpon a Lyon raging yet with ire
 He boldly rode and made him to obey
 It was the beast that whylome did forray
 The Nemaean forrest, till th' *Amphytrionide*
 Him slew, and with his hude did him array;
 Belunde his back a sithe, and by his side
 Vnder his belt he bore a sickle circling wide

The sixt was *August*, being rich arrayd
 In garment all of gold downe to the ground;
 Yet rode he not, but led a louely Mayd
 Forth by the lilly hand, the which was cround
 With eares of corne, and full her hand was found;
 That was the righteous Virgin, which of old
 Liv'd here on earth, and plenty made abound;
 But, after Wrong was lov'd and Iustice solde,
 She left th'vnrighteous world and was to heauen extold

Next him, *September* marched eeke on foote;
 Yet was he heauy laden with the spoyle
 Of haruests riches, which he made his boot,
 And him enricht with bounty of the soyle
 In his one hand, as fit for haruests toyle,
 He held a knife-hook; and in th' other hand

A paire of waights, with which he did assoyle
Both more and lesse, where it in doubt did stand,
And equal gaue to each as Iustice duly scann'd.

Then came *October* full of merry glee:

For, yet his noule was totty of the must,
Which he was treading in the wine-fats see,
And of the ioyous oyle, whose gentle gust
Made him so frolick and so full of lust:
Vpon a dreadfull Scorpion he did ride,
The same which by *Dianaes* doom vniust
Slew great *Orion*: and eeke by his side
He had his ploughing share, and coulter ready tyde.

Next was *November*, he full grosse and fat,

As fed with lard, and that right well might seeme;
For, he had been a fatting hogs of late,
That yet his browes with sweat, did reek and steem,
And yet the season was full sharp and breem;
In planting eeke he took no small delight:
Whereon he rode, not easie was to deeme;
For it a dreadfull *Centaure* was in sight,
The seed of *Saturne*, and faire *Nais*, *Chiron* hight.

And after him, came next the chill *December*:

Yet he through merry feasting which he made,
And great bonfires, did not the cold remember;
His Sauours birth his mind so much did glad:
Vpon a shaggy-bearded Goat he rode,
The same wherewith *Dan Iuoe* in tender yeares,
They say, was nourisht by th'*Idaean* mayd;
And in his hand a broad deepe boawle he beares;
Of which, he freely drinks an health to all his pecres.

Then came old *January*, wrapped well

In many weeds to keep the cold away;
Yet did he quake and quier like to quell,
And blowe his nayles to warme them if he may:

For, they were numbd with holding all the day
An hatchet keene, with which he felled wood,
And from the trees did lop the needles spry
Vpon an huge great Eirth-pot steine he stood,
From whose wide mouth, there flowed forth the Roman
flood

And lastly, came cold *February*, sitting
In an old wagon, for he could not ride,
Drawne of two fishes for the season fitting,
Which through the flood before did softly slide
And swim away yet had he by his side
His plough and harnesses fit to till the ground,
And tooles to prune the trees, before the pride
Of hasting Prime did make them burgein round:
So past the twelue Months forth, and their dew places found

And after these, there came the *Day*, and *Night*,
Riding together both with equall pace,
Th'one on a Palfrey blacke, the other white;
But *Night* had couered her vncomely face
With a blacke veile, and held in hand a mace,
On top whereof the moon and stars were pight,
And sleep and darknesse round about did trace:
But *Day* did beare, vpon his scepters hight,
The goodly Sun, encompassed all with beames bright.

Then came the *Howres*, faire daughters of high loue,
And timely *Night*, the which were all endewed
With wondrous beauty fit to kindle loue;
But they were Virgins all, and loue eschewed,
That might forsack the charge to them foreshewed
By mighty loue; who did them Porters make
Of heauens gate (whence all the gods issued)
Which they did dayly watch, and nightly wake
By euen turnes, ne euer did their charge forsake.

And after all came *Life*, and lastly *Death*;
Death with most grim and griesly visage seene,
 Yet is he nought but parting of the breath;
 Ne ought to see, but like a shade to weene,
 Vnbodied, vnsoul'd, vnheard, vnseene.
 But *Life* was like a faire, young lusty boy,
 Such as they faine *Dan Cupid* to haue beene,
 Full of delightfull health and liuely joy,
 Deckt all with flowres, and wings of gold fit to employ.

When these were past, thus gan the *Titanesse*;
 Lo, mighty mother, now be iudge and say,
 Whether in all thy creatures more or lesse
 CHANGE doth not raigñ and beare the greatest sway:
 For, who sees not, that *Time* on all doth pray?
 But *Times* do change and moue continually.
 So nothing here long standeth in one stay:
 Wherefore, this lower world who can deny
 But to be subject still to Mutabilitie?

XXVI

MICHAEL DRAYTON

1563-1631

Agincourt

FAIR stood the wind for France
 When we our sails advance,
 Nor now to prove our chance
 Longer will tarry;
 But putting to the main,
 At Caux, the mouth of Seine,
 With all his martial train
 Landed King Harry.

And taking many a fort,
Furnish'd in warlike sort,
Marcheth tow'rs Agincourt
In happy hour;
Skirmishing day by day
With those that stopp'd his way,
Where the French gen'ral lay
With all his power.

Which, in his height of pride,
King Henry to deride,
His ransom to provide
Unto him sending;
Which he neglects the while
As from a nation vile,
Yet with an angry smile
Their fall portending.

And turning to his men,
Quoth our brave Henry then,
"Though they to one be ten
Be not amazèd:
Yet have we well begun;
Battles so bravely won
Have ever to the sun
By fame been raised.

"And for myself (quoth he) .
This my full rest shall be:
England ne'er mourn for me
Nor more esteem me:
Victor I will remain
Or on this earth lie slain,
Never shall she sustain
Loss to redeem me.

“Poitiers and Cussy tell,
When most their pride did swell,
Under our swords they fell:
 No less our skill is
Than when our grandsire great,
Claiming the regal seat,
By many a warlike feat
 Lopp’d the French hies.

The Duke of York so dread
The eager vaward led;
With the main Henry sped
 Among his henchmen.
Excester had the rear,
A braver man not there;
O Lord, how hot they were
 On the false Frenchmen!

They now to fight are gone,
Armour on armour shone,
Drum now to drum did groan,
 To hear was wonder;
That with the cries they make
The very earth did shake:
Trumpet to trumpet spake,
 Thunder to thunder.

Well it thine age became,
O noble Erpingham,
Which didst the signal aim
 To our hid forces!
When from a meadow by,
Like a storm suddenly
The English archery
 Stuck the French horses.

With Spanish yew so strong,
Arrows a cloth-yard long
That like to serpents stung,
Piercing the weather;
None from his fellow starts,
But playing manly parts,
And like true English hearts
Stuck close together.

When down their bows they threw,
And forth their bilbos drew,
And on the French they flew,
Not one was tardy;
Arms were from shoulders sent,
Scalps to the teeth were rent,
Down the French peasants went—
Our men were hardy.

This while our noble king,
His broadsword brandishing,
Down the French host did ding
As to o'er whelm it;
And many a deep wound lent,
His arms with blood besprent,
And many a cruel dent
Bruisèd his helmet.

Gloster, that duke so good,
Next of the royal blood,
For famous England stood
With his brave brother;
Clarence, in steel so bright,
Though but a maiden knight,
Yet in that furious fight
Scarce such another.

Warwick in blood did wade,
Oxford the foe invade,
And cruel slaughter made
Still as they ran up;
Suffolk his axe did ply,
Beaumont and Willoughby
Bare them right doughtily,
Ferrers and Fanhope.

Upon Saint Crispin's Day
Fought was this noble fray,
Which fame did not delay
To England to carry.
O when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen?
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry?

XXVII

From *Nimphidia*

OLDE Chavcer doth of *Topas* tell,
Mad Rablais of *Pantagruell*,
A latter third of *Dowsabell*,

With such poore trifles playing:
Others the like have laboured at
Some of this thing, and some of that,
And many of they know not what,
But that they must be saying.

Another sort there bee, that will
Be talking of the Fayries still,
Nor neuer can they haue their fill,
As they were wedded to them;
No Tales of them their thirst can slake,
So much delight therein they take,
And some strange thing they faine would make,
Knew they the way to doe them.

Then since no Muse hath bin so bold,
Or of the Later, or the ould,
Those Eluish secrets to vnfold,
Which lye from others reeding,
My actiue Muse to light shall bring,
The court of that proud Fayry King,
And tell there, of the Reuelling,
Ioue prosper my proceeding.

And thou NIMPHIDIA gentle *Fay*,
Which meeting me vpon the way,
These secrets didst to me bewray,
Which now I am in telling:
My pretty light fantastick mayde,
I here inuoke thee to my ayde,
That I may speake what thou hast sayd,
In numbers smoothly swelling.

This Pallace standeth in the Ayre,
By Nigromancie placed there,
That it no Tempests needs to feare,
Which way so ere it blow it.
And somewhat Southward tow'rd the Noone,
Whence lyes a way vp to the Moone,
And thence the *Fayrie* can as soone
Passe to the earth below it.

The Walls of Spiders legs are made,
Well mortized and finely layd,
He was the master of his Trade,
It curiously that builded:
The Windowes of the eyes of Cats,
And for the Roofe, instead of Slats,
Is couer'd with the skinns of Batts,
With Moonshine that are guilded. . .

. . . But listen and I shall you tell
A chance in *Fayrie* that befell,
Which certainly may please some well;
In Loue and Armes delighting:
Of Oberon that Iealous grewe,
Of one of his owne *Fayrie* crue,
Too well (he fear'd) his Queene that knew,
His loue but ill requiting.

Pigwigen was this *Fayrie* knight,
One wondrous gracious in the sight
Of faire Queene *Mab*, which day and night,
He amorously obserued;
Which made king *Oberon* suspect,
His Seruice tooke too good effect,
His saucinesse, and often checkt,
And could have wisht him starued.

Pigwigen gladly would commend,
Some token to queene *Mab* to send,
If Sea, or Land, him ought could lend,
Were worthy of her wearing:
At length this Louer doth deuise,
A Bracelett made of Emmotts eyes,
A thing he thought that shee would prize,
No whitt her state impayring.

And to the Queene a Letter writes,
Which he most curiously endites,
Coniuring her by all the rites
Of loue, she would be pleased,
To meete him her true Seruant, where
They might without suspect or feare,
Themselves to one another cleare,
And haue their poore hearts eased.

At mid-night the appointed hower,
And for the Queene a fitting Bower,
(Quoth he) is that faire Cowslip flower,
On *Hipant* hill that groweth,
In all your Trayne there's not a *Fay*,
That euer went to gather May,
But she hath made it in her way,
The tallest there that groweth.

When by *Tom Thum* a *Fayrie Page*,
He sent it, and doth him engage,
By promise of a mighty wage,
It secretly to carrie:
Which done, the Queene her maydes doth call,
And bids them to be ready all,
She would goe see her Summer Hall,
She could no longer tarrie.

Her Chariot ready straight is made,
Each thing therein is fitting layde,
That she by nothing might be stayde,
For naught must be her letting,
Foure nimble Gnats the Horses were,
Their Harnasses of Gossamere,
Flye Cranion her Chariottere,
Vpon the Coach-box getting.

Her Chariot of a Snayles fine shell,
Which for the colours did excell:
The faire Queene *Mab*, becomming well,
So liuely was the limming:
The seate the soft wooll of the Bee;
The couer, (gallantly to see)
The wing of a pyde Butterflee,
I trowe t'was simple trimming.

The wheelles compos'd of Crickets bones,
And daintily made for the nonce,
For feare of ratling on the stones,
 With Thistle-downe they shod it;
For all her Maydens much did feare,
If *Oberon* had chanc'd to heare,
That *Mab* his Queene should haue bin there,
 He would not haue abroad it.

She mounts her Chariot with a trice,
Nor would she stay for no advice,
Vntill her Maydes that were so nice,
 To wayte on her were fitted,
But ranne her selfe away alone;
Which when they heard there was not one,
But hasted after to be gone,
 As she had beene diswitted.

Hop, and *Mop*, and *Drop* so cleare,
Pip, and *Trip*, and *Skip* that were,
To *Mab* their Soueraigne euer deare:
 Her speciall Maydes of Honour;
Fib, and *Tib*, and *Pinck*, and *Pin*,
Tick, and *Quick*, and *Ill*, and *Iin*,
Tits and *Nit*, and *Wap*, and *Win*,
 The Trayne that wayte vpon her.

Vpon a Grashopper they got,
And what with Amble, and with Trot,
For hedge nor ditch they spared not,
 But after her they hie them.
A Cobweb ouer them they throw,
To shield the winde if it should blowe,
Themselues they wisely could bestowe,
 Lest any should espie them.

But let us leaue Queene *Mab* a while,
Through many a gate, o'r many a stile,
That now had gotten by this wile,
Her deare *Pigwigen* kissing,
And tell how *Oberon* doth fare,
Who grew as mad as any Hare,
When he had sought each place with care,
And found his Queene was missing.

By grisly *Pluto* he doth swear,
He rent his cloths, and tore his haire,
And as he runneth, here and there,
An *Acorne* cup he greeteth;
Which soone he taketh by the stalk
About his head he lets it walke,
Nor doth he any creature balke,
But lays on all he meeteth. . . .

. . . Men talke of the Aduentures strange
Of *Don Quishott*, and of their change
Through which he Armed oft did range,
Of *Sancha Panchas* trauell:
But should a man tell euery thing
Done by this frantiecke *Fayrie* King
And them in lofty Numbers sing
It well his wits might grauell.

Scarse set on shore, but therewithall,
He meeteth *Pucke*, which most men call
Hobgoblin, and on him doth fall,
With words from frenzy spoken;
Hoh, hoh, quoth *Hob*, God saue thy grace,
Who drest thee in this pitteous case,
He thus that spoild my soueraignes face,
I would his necke were broken.

This *Puck* seemes but a dreaming dolt
Still walking like a ragged Colt,
And oft out of a Bush doth bolt,

Of purpose to decieu us.
And leading vs makes vs to stray,
Long Winters nights out of the way,
And when we stick in mire and clay
Hob doth with laughter leauc vs.

Deare *Puck* (quoth he) my wife is gone
As ere thou lou'st King *Oberon*,
Let every thing but this alone

With vengeance, and pursue her;
Bring her to me alieu or dead,
Or that vilde thief, *Pigwiggins* head,
That villaine hath defil'd my bed
He to this folly drew her.

Quoth *Puck*, My Liege Ile neuer lin,
But I will thorough thicke and thinne,
Vntill at length I bring her in,

My dearest Lord nere doubt it:
Thorough Brake, thorough Brier,
Thorough Muck, thorough Mier,
Thorough Water, thorough Fier,
And thus goes *Puck* about it.

This thing NIMPHIDIA ouer hard
That on this mad King had a guard
Not doubting of a great reward,

For first this businesse broching;
And through the ayre away doth goe
Swift as an Arrow from the Bowe,
To let her Soueraigne *Mab* to know,
What perill was approaching.

The Queene bound with Loues powerfullst charme
Sate with *Pigwiggen* arme in arme,
Her Merry Maydes that thought no harme,
About the roome were skipping:
A Humble-Bee their Minstrell, playde
Vpon his Hoboy; eu'ry Mayde
Fit for this Reuells was arayde,
The Hornepipe neatly tripping.

In comes *Nymphidia*, and doth crie,
My Soueraigne for your safety flic,
For there is danger but too nic,
I posted to forewarne you:
The King hath sent *Hobgoblin* out,
To seeke you all the Fields about,
And of your safety you may doubt,
If he but once discerne you.

When like an vprore in a Towne,
Before them euery thing went downe,
Some tore a Ruffe, and some a Gowne,
Gainst one another iustling:
They flewe about like Chaffe i' th' winde,
For hast some left their Maskes behinde;
Some could not stay their Gloues to finde,
There neuer was such bustling.

Forth ranne they by a secret way,
Into a brake that neere them lay;
Yet much they doubted there to stay,
Lest *Hob* should hap to find them:
He had a sharpe and piercing sight,
All one to him the day and night,
And therefore were resolu'd by flight,
To leave this place behind them.

At length one chanc'd to find a Nut,
 In th' end of which a hole was cut,
 Which lay vpon a Hazell roote,
 There scatt' red by a Squirrell:
 Which out the kernell gotten had;
 When quoth this *Fay* deare Queene be glad,
 Let *Oberon* be ne'r so mad,
 He set you safe from perill.

Come all into this Nut (quoth she)
 Come closely in, be rul'd by me,
 Each one may here a chuser be,
 For roome yee need not wastle:
 Nor neede yee be together heapt;
 So one by one therein they crept,
 And lying downe they soundly slept,
 And safe as in a Castle. . . .

XXVIII

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1586-1616

FROM *Venus and Adonis*

Venus pleads with Adonis to stay with her, paints a fearsome picture of hunting the boar, and a delightfully vivid one of hunting hare, but he goes his own way and is slain)

. . . But all in vain; good Queen, it will not be:
 She hath assay'd as much as may be prov'd;
 Her pleading hath deserv'd a greater fee;
 She's Love, she loves, and yet she is not lov'd.
 "Fie fie," he says, "you crush me; let me go;
 You have no reason to withhold me so."

‘Thou hadst been gone,” quoth she, “sweet boy, ere this,
But that thou told’st me thou would’st hunt the boar.
O, be advised: thou know’st not what it is
With javelin’s point a churlish swine to gore,
Whose tushes never sheath’d lie whetteth still,
Like to a mortal butcher bent to kill.

“On his bow-back he hath a battel set
Of bristly pikes, that ever threat his foes;
His eyes, like glow-worms, shine when he doth fret;
His snout digs sepulchres where’er he goes;
Being moved, he strikes whate’er is in his way,
And whom he strikes his crooked tushes slay.

“His brawny sides, with hairy bristles arméd,
Are better proof than thy spear’s point can enter;
His short thick neck cannot be easily harméd;
Being ireful, on the lion he will venture:
The thorny brambles and embracing bushes,
As fearful of him, part; through whom he rushes.

“Alas, he nought esteems that face of thine,
To which Love’s eyes pay tributary gazes;
Nor thy soft hands, sweet lips and crystal cync,
Whose full perfection all the world amazes;
But having thee at vantage,—wondrous dread!—
Would root these beauties as he roots the mead.

“O, let him keep thy loathsome cabin still;
Beauty hath nought to do with such foul fiends;
Come not within his danger by thy will;
They that thrive well take counsel of their friends
When thou didst name the boar, not to dissemble,
I fear’d thy fortune, and my joints did tremble.

"Didst thou not mark my face? was it not white?
Saw'st thou not signs of fear lurk in mine eye?
Grew I not faint? and fell I not downright?
Within my bosom, whereon thou dost lie,
My boding heart pants, beats, and takes no rest,
But, like an earthquake, shakes thee on my breast.

"For where Love reigns, disturbing Jealousy
Doth call himself Affection's sentinel;
Gives false alarms, suggesteth mutiny,
And in a peaceful hour doth cry, 'Kill, kill!'
Distemp'ring gentle Love in his desire,
As air and water do abate the fire

"This sour informer, this hate-breeding spy,
This canker that eats up Love's tender spring,
This carry-tale, dissentious Jealousy,
That sometime true news, sometime false doth bring,
Knocks at my heart and whispers in mine ear
That if I love thee, I thy death should fear:

"And more than so, presenteth to mine eye
The picture of an angry, chafing boar,
Under whose sharp fangs on his back doth lie
An image like thyself, all stain'd with gore;
Whose blood upon the fresh flowers being shed
Doth make them droop with grief and hang the head.

"What should I do, seeing thee so indeed,
That tremble at th' imagination?
The thought of it doth make my faint heart bleed,
And fear doth teach it divination:
I prophesy thy death, my living sorrow,
If thou encounter with the boar to-morrow.

"But if thou needs wilt hunt, be ruled by me;
Uncouple at the timorous flying hare,
Or at the fox which lives by subtilty,
Or at the roe which no encounter dare:
Pursue these fearful creatures o'er the downs,
And on thy well-breath'd horse keep with thy hounds.

"And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
Mark the poor wretch, to overshut his troubles,
How he outruns the wind, and with what care
He cranks and crosses with a thousand doubles:
The many musets through the which he goes
Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.

"Sometime he runs among a flock of sheep,
To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell;
And sometime where earth-delving conies keep,
To stop the loud pursuers in their yell;
And sometime sorteth with a herd of deer:
Danger deviseth shifts; wit waits on fear:

"For there his smell with others being mingled,
The hot scent-snuffing hounds are driven to doubt,
Ceasing their clamorous cry, till they have singled
With much ado the cold fault cleanly out;
Then do they spend their mouths: Echo replies,
As if another chase were in the skies.

"By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
To hearken if his foes pursue him still:
Anon their loud alarums he doth hear;
And now his grief may be comparéd well
To one sore sick that hears the passing-bell.

"Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch
Turn, and return, indenting with the way;
Each envious brier his weary legs doth scratch,
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay;
For misery is trodden on by many,
And being low never relieved by any.

"Lie quietly, and hear a little more;
Nay, do not struggle, for thou shalt not rise:
To make thee hate the hunting of the boar,
Unlike myself thou hear'st me moralize,
Applying this to that, and so to so;
For love can comment upon every woe.

"Where did I leave?" "No matter where," quoth he,
"Leave me, and then the story aptly ends:
The night is spent." "Why, what of that?" quoth she.
"I am," quoth he, "expected of my friends." . . .

XXIX

SIR JOHN SUCKLING

1608-1642

A Ballad Upon a Wedding

I TELL thee *Dick* where I have been,
Where I the rarest things have seen;
Oh things without compare!
Such sights again cannot be found
In any place on English ground,
Be it a *Wake* or *Fair*.

At Charing-Crosse, hard by the way,
Where we (thou know'st) do sell our Hay,
 There is a house with stairs;
And there did I see comming down
 Such folk as are not in our Town,
 Vorty at least, in Pairs.

Amongst the rest, one Pest'lent fine,
(His beard no bigger though then thine)
 Walked on before the rest:
Our Landlord looks like nothing to him:
The King (God blesse him) 'twould undo him,
 Should he go still so drest.

At Course-a-Park, without all doubt,
He should have first been taken out
 By all the Maids i' th' Town:
Though lusty Roger there had been,
Or little George upon the Green,
 Or Vincent of the Crown.

But wot you what? the youth was going
To make an end of all his wooing;
 The parson for him staid:
Yet by his leave (for all his haste)
He did not so much wish all past
 (Perchance) as did the maid.

The maid (and therby hangs a tale),
For such a maid no Whitson-ale
 Could ever yet produce:
No Grape, that's kindly ripe, could be
So round, so plump, so soft as she,
 Nor half so full of Juyce.

Her finger was so small, the Ring
Would not stay on which they did bring,
It was too wide a Peck:
And to say truth (for out it must)
It looked like the great Collar (just)
About our young Colt's neck.

Her feet beneath her Petticoat,
Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they fear'd the light:
But Oh! she dances such a way!
No Sun upon an Easter-day
Is half so fine a sight.

He would have kist her once or twice,
But she would not, she was so nice,
She would not do't in sight,
And then she lookt as who should say
I will do what I list to-day;
And you shall do't at night.

Her Cheeks so rare a white was on,
No Daxy makes comparison
(Who sees them is undone),
For streaks of red were mingled there,
Such as are on a Katherine Pear
The side that's next the sun.

Her lips were red, and one was thin,
Compar'd to that was next her chin;
(Some Bee had stung it newly.)
But (*Dick*) her eyes so guard her face:
I durst no more upon them gaze
Than on the Sun in *July*.

Her mouth so small when she does speak,
Thou'dst swear her teeth her words did break,
That they might passage get,
But she so handled still the matter,
They came as good as ours, or better,
And are not spent a whit.

If wishing should be any sin,
The Parson himself had guilty bin;
(She lookt that day so purely);
And did the youth so oft the feat
At night, as some did in conceit,
It would have spoil'd him surely.

Just in the nick the Cook knocked thrice,
And all the waiters in a trice
His summons did obey,
Each serving man with dish in hand,
Marcht boldly up, like our Train'd Band,
Presented, and away.

When all the meat was on the Table,
What man of knife, or teeth, was able
To stay to be intreated?
And this the very reason was,
Before the Parson could say Grace,
The Company was seated.

The bus'nesse of the Kitchin's great,
For it is fit that men should eat;
Nor was it there denied:
Passion oh me! how I run on!
There's that that would be thought upon
(I trow) besides the Bride.

Now hats fly off, and youths carrouse;
Healts first go round, and then the house,
The Bride's came thick and thick:
And when 'twas nam'd anothers health,
Perhaps he made it hers by stealth;
And who could help it? Dick?

On the sodain up they rise and dance;
Then sit again and sigh, and glance:
Then dance again and kisse:
Thus several waies the time did passe,
Till ev'ry woman wisht her place,
And every Man wisht his.

By this time all were stoln aside
To counsel and undresse the Bride;
But that he must not know;
But yet 'twas thought he ghest her mind,
And did not mean to stay behind
Above an hour or so.

When in he came (*Dick*) there she lay
Like new-fal'n snow melting away
(*'Twas time I trow to part*);
Kisses were now the onely stay,
Which soon she gave, as who would say,
Good Boy! with all my heart.

But, just as heav'ns would have, to crosse it,
In came the Bridesmaids with the Posset:
The bridegroom eat in spight;
For had he left the Women to't,
It would have cost two hours to do't,
Which were too much that night.

At length the candles out and out
All that they had not done they do't.
What that is, who can tell?
But I believe it was no more
Than thou and I have done before
With *Bridget*, and with *Nell*.

XXX

JOHN MILTON

1608-1674

Satan rallies his hosts in Hell

(From *Paradise Lost*)

. . . Is this the Region, this the Soil, the Clime,
Said then the lost Arch Angel, this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since hee
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: fardest from him is best
Whom reason hath equall'd, force hath made supream
Above his equals. Farewel happy Fields
Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less then hee
Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence;
Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce

To reign is worth ambition though in Hell
Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
Th' associates and copartners of our loss
Lye thus astonisht on th' oblivious Pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy Mansion, or once more
With rallied Arms to try what may be yet
Regained in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell?

So *Satan* spake, and him *Beelzebub*
Thus answer'd Leader of those Armies bright,
Which but th' Omnipotent none could have foild,
If once they hear that voyce, their liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft
In worst extreames, and on the perilous edge
Of battel when it rag'd, in all assaults
Their surest signal, they will soon resume
New courage and revive, though now they lye
Groveling and prostrate on yon Lake of Fire,
As we erewhile, astounded and amaz'd,
No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious highth

He scarce had ceas't when the superiour Fiend
Was moving toward the shore, his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
Behind him cast, the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the *Tuscan* Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of *Fesole*,
Or in *Valdarno*, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe
His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on *Norwegian* hills, to be the Mast,
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walkt with to support uneasy steps
Over the burning Marle, not like those steps
On Heavens Azure, and the torrid Clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;

Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach
 Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd
 His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
 Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks,
 In *Vallombrosa*, where th' *Etrurian* shades
 High overarch't imbower; or scattered sedge
 Afloat, when with fierce Winds *Orion* arm'd
 Hath vex't the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves orethrew
Busiris and his *Memphian* Chivalric,
 While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
 The Sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
 From the safe shore their floating Carkases
 And broken Chariot Wheels, so thick bestrown
 Abject and lost lay these, covering the Flood,
 Under amazement of their hideous change.
 He call'd so loud, that all the hollow Deep
 Of Hell resounded. Princes, Potentates,
 Warriors, the Flow'r of Heav'n, once yours, now lost,
 If such astonishment as this can sieze
 Eternal spirits; or have ye chos'n this place
 After the toyl of Battel to repose
 Your wearied vertue, for the ease you find
 To slumber here, as in the Vales of Heav'n?
 Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
 To adore the Conquerour? who now beholds
 Cherube and Seraph rowling in the Flood
 With scatter'd Arms and Ensigns, till anon
 His swift pursuers from Heav'n Gates discern
 Th' advantage, and descending tread us down
 Thus drooping, or with linked Thunderbolts
 Transfix us to the bottom of this Gulfe.
 Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n.

They heard, and were abasht, and up they sprung
 Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch
 On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
 Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.
 Nor did they not perceave the evil plight

In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;
 Yet to their Generals Voyce they soon obeyd
 Innumerable. As when the potent Rod
 Of *Amrans* Son in *Egypt*s evill day
 Wav'd round the Coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
 Of *Locusts*, warping on the Eastern Wind,
 That ore the Realm of impious *Pharaoh* hung
 Like Night, and darken'd all the Land of *Nile*:
 So numberless were those bad *Angels* seen
 Hovering on wing under the Cope of Hell
 'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding Fires;
 Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted Spear
 Of their great Sultan waving to direct
 Thir course, in even ballance down they light
 On the firm brimstone, and fill all the Plain;
 A multitude, like which the populous North
 Pour'd never from her frozen loyns, to pass
Rhene or the *Danaw*, when her barbarous Sons
 Came like a Deluge on the South, and spread
 Beneath *Gibraltar* to the *Lybian* sands
 Forthwith from every Squadron and each Band
 The Heads and Leaders thither hast where stood
 Their great Commander; Godlike shapes and forms
 Excelling human, Princely Dignities,
 And Powers that earst in Heaven sat on Thrones;
 Though of their Names in heav'nly Records now
 Be no memorial, blotted out and ras'd
 By thir Rebellion, from the Books of Life.
 Nor had they yet among the Sons of *Eve*
 Got them new Names, till wandring ore the Earth,
 Through Gods high sufferance for the tryal of man,
 By falsities and lyes the greatest part
 Of Mankind they corrupted to forsake
 God their Creator, and th' invisible
 Glory of him, that made them, to transform
 Oft to the Image of a Brute, adorn'd
 With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold,

And Devils to adore for Deities;
Then were they known to men by various Names,
And various Idols through the Heathen World. . . .

. . . All these and more came flocking; but with looks
Down cast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd
Obscure som glimps of joy, to have found thir chief
Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost
In loss it self; which on his count'nance cast
Like doubtful hue: but he his wonted pride
Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore
Semblance of worth not substance, gently rais'd
Their fainted courage, and dispel'd their fears.
Then strait commands that at the warlike sound
Of Trumpets loud and Clarions be upreard
His mighty Standard; that proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a Cherube tall:
Who forthwith from the glittering Staff unfurld
Th' Imperial Ensign, which full high advanc't
Shon like a Meteor streaming to the Wind
With Gemms and Golden lustre rich imblaz'd,
Seraphic arms and Trophies: all the while
Sonomous mettall blowing Martial sounds:
At which the universal Host upsent
A shout that tore Hells Concave, and beyond
Frighted the Reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand Banners rise into the Air
With Orient Colours waving: with them rose
A Forrest huge of Spears: and thronging Helms
Appear'd, and serried Shields in thick array
Of depth immeasurable: Anon they move
In perfect *Phalanx* to the *Dorian* mood
Of Flutes and soft Recorders; such as rais'd
To highth of noblest temper Hero's old
Arming to Battel, and in stead of rage
Deliberate valour breath'd, firm and unmov'd

With dread of death to flight or foul retreat,
 Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
 With solemn touches, troubl'd thoughts, and chase
 Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
 From mortal or immortal minds Thus they
 Breathing united force with fixed thought
 Mov'd on in silence to soft Pipes that charm'd
 Thir painful steps o're the burnt soyle, and now
 Advanc't in view they stand, a horrid Front
 Of dreadful length and dazzling Arms, in guise
 Of Warriors old with order'd Spear and Shield,
 Awaiting what command thir mighty Chief
 Had to impose He through the armed Files
 Darts his experienc't eye, and soon traverse
 The whole Battalion views, thir order due,
 Thir vivages and stature as of Gods,
 Thir number last he sums. And now his heart
 Distends with pride, and hardning in his strength
 Glories: For never since created man,
 Met such imbodied force, as nam'd with these
 Could merit more then that small infantry
 Warr'd on by Cranes: though all the Giant brood
 Of *Phlegra* with th' Heroic Race were joyn'd
 That fought at *Theb's* and *Ilium*, on each side
 Mixt with auxiliar Gods, and what resounds
 In Fable or *Romance* of *Uthers* Son
 Begirt with *British* and *Armoic* Knights,
 And all who since, Baptiz'd or Infidel
 Jousted in *Aspramont* or *Montalban*,
Damasco, or *Marocco*, or *Trebisonde*,
 Or whom *Biserta* sent from *Afric* shore
 When *Charlemain* with all his Peerage fell
 By *Fontarabbia*. Thus far these beyond
 Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
 Thir dread Commander: he above the rest
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent
 Stood like a Tower; his form had yet not lost

All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
 Less than Arch Angel ruin'd, and th' excess
 Of Glory obscur'd As when the Sun new ris'n
 Looks through the Horizontal misty Air
 Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
 In dim Eclips disastrous twilight sheds
 On half the Nations, and with fear of change
 Perplexes Monarchs Dark'n'd so, yet shon
 Above them all th' Arch Angel but his face
 Deep sears of Thunder had intrencht, and care
 Sat on his faded cheek, but under Browes
 Of dauntless courage, and considerate Pride
 Waiting revenge cruel his eye, but cast
 Signs of remorse and passion to behold
 The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
 (Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd
 For ever now to have their lot in pain,
 Millions of Spirits for his fault amerc't
 Of Heav'n, and from Eternal Splendors flung
 For his revolt, yet faithfull how they stood,
 Thir Glory witherd As when Heavens Fire
 Hath scath'd the Forrest Oaks, or Mountain Pines,
 With singed top their stately growth though bare
 Stands on the blasted Heath. He now prepar'd
 To speak, whereat their doubl'd Ranks they bend
 From Wing to Wing, and half enclose him round
 With all his Peers attention held them mute
 Thrice he assayd, and thrice in spite of scorn,
 Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth: at last
 Words interwove with sighs found out their way

O Myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers
 Matchless, but with th' Almighty, and that strife
 Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,
 As this place testifies, and this dire change
 hateful to utter. but what power of mind
 Foreseeing or presaging, from the Depth
 Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd,

How such united force of Gods, how such
 As stood like these, could ever know repulse?
 For who can yet beleeeve, though after loss,
 That all these puissant Legions, whose exile
 Hath emptied Heav'n, shall faile to re-ascend
 Self-rai's'd, and repossess their native seat?
 For me, be witness all the Host of Heav'n,
 If counsels different, or danger shun'd
 By me, have lost our hopes. But he who reigns
 Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure
 Sat on his Throne, upheld by old repute
 Consent or custome, and his Regal State
 Put forth at full, but still his strength conceal'd,
 Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.
 Henceforth his might we know, and know our own
 So as not either to provoke, or dread
 New warr, provok't; our better part remains
 To work in close design, by fraud or guile
 What force effected not: that he no less
 At length from us may find, who overcomes
 By force, hath overcome but half his foe.
 Space may produce new Worlds; whereof so rife
 There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long
 Intended to create, and therein plant
 A generation, whom his choice regard
 Should favour equal to the Sons of Heaven;
 Thither, if but to prie, shall be perhaps
 Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere:
 For this Infernal Pit shall never hold
 Cæstrial Spirits in Bondage, nor th' Abyse
 Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
 Full Counsel must mature: Peace is despair'd,
 For who can think Submission! Warr then, Warr
 Open or understood must be resolv'd.

He spake: and to confirm his words, out-flew
 Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
 Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze

Far round illumin'd hell: highly they rag'd
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms
Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war, . .
Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n.

XXXI

Adam and the Archangel

. . . Adam last reply'd
. . . Henceforth I learne, that to obey is best
And love with feare the onely God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deemd weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simply meek; that suffering for Truths sake
Is fortitude to highest victorie,
And to the faithful Death the Gate of Life;
Taught this by his example whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest.
To whom thus also th' Angel last repli'd:
This having learnt, thou hast attained the summe
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the Starrs
Thou knewst by name, and all th' ethereal Powers,
All secrets of the deep, all Natures works,
Or works of God in Heav'n, Air, Earth, or Sea,
And all the riches of this World enjoydst,
And all the rule, one Empire; onely add
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,
Add Vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
By name to come call'd Charitie, the soul
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier farr.

Let us descend now therefore from this top
 Of Speculation; for the hour precise
 Exacts our parting hence; and see the Guards,
 By mee encampt on yonder Hill, expect
 Thir motion, at whose Front a flaming Sword,
 In signal of remove, waves fiercely round;
 We may no longer stay: go, waken *Eve*;
 Her also I with gentle Dreams have calm'd
 Portending good, and all her spirits compos'd
 To meek submission: thou at season fit
 Let her with thee partake what thou hast heard,
 Chiefly what may concern her Faith to know,
 The great deliverance by her Seed to come
 (For by the Womans Seed) on all Mankind.
 That ye may live, which will be many dayes,
 Both in one Faith unanimous though sad,
 With cause for evils past, yet much more cheer'd
 With meditation on the happie end.
 He ended, and they both descend the Hill;
 Descended, *Adam* to the Bowre where *Eve*
 Lay sleeping ran before, but found her wak't;
 And thus with words not sad she him receav'd.

Whence thou returnst, & whither wentst, I know;
 For God is also in sleep, and Dreams advise,
 Which he hath sent propitious, some great good
 Presaging, since with sorrow and hearts distress
 Wearied I fell asleep: but now lead on;
 In mee is no delay; with thee to goe,
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to mee
 Art all things under Heav'n, all places thou,
 Who for my wilful crime art banisht hence.
 This further consolation yet secure
 I carry hence; though all by mee is lost,
 Such favour I unworthie am voutsaft,
 By mee the Promis'd Seed shall all restore.

So spake our Mother *Eve*, and *Adam* heard

Well pleas'd, but answer'd not; for now too nigh
Th' Archangel stood, and from the other Hill
To thir fixt Station, all in bright array
The Cherubim descended; on the ground
Gliding meteorous, as Ev'ning Mist
Ris'n from a River o're the marish glides,
And gathers ground fast at the Labourers heel
Homeward returning. High in Front advanc't,
The brandisht Sword of God before them blaz'd
Fierce as a Comet; which with torrid heat,
And vapour as the *Libyan* Air adust,
Began to parch that temperate Clime; whereat
In either hand the hastning Angel caught
Our lingring Parents, and to th' Eastern Gate
Led them direct, and down the Cliff as fast
To the subjected Plaine; then disappeer'd.
They looking back, all th' Eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late thir happie seat,
Wav'd over by that flaming Brand, the Gate
With dreadful Faces throng'd and fierie Armes:
Som natural tears they drop'd, but wip'd them soon;
The World was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide;
They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
Through *Eden* took thir solitarie way.

JOHN DRYDEN,

1631-1700

Shaftesbury(From *Absalom and Achitophel*)

OF these the false *Achitophel* was first:
 A Name to all Succeeding Ages curst.
 For close Designs and crooked Counsels fir;
 Sagacious, Bold, and Turbulent of wit:
 Restless, unfixt in Principles and Place;
 In Pow'r unpleas'd, impatient of Disgrace.
 A fiery Soul, which working out its way,
 Fretted the Pigmy Body to decay:
 And o'r inform'd the Tenement of Clay.
 A daring Pilot in extremity;
 Pleas'd with the Danger, when the Waves went high
 He sought the Storms; but, for a Calm unfit,
 Would Steer too nigh the Sands, to boast his Wit.
 Great Wits are sure to Madness near alli'd;
 And thin Partitions do their Bounds divide:
 Else, why should he, with Wealth and Honour blest,
 Refuse his Age the needful hours of Rest?
 Punish a Body which he could not please,
 Bankrupt of Life, yet Prodigal of Ease?
 And all to leave, what with his Toil he won,
 To that unfeather'd, two-legg'd thing, a Son:
 Got, while his Soul did huddled Notions trie;
 And born a shapeless Lump, like Anarchy.
 In Friendship false, implacable in Hate,
 Resolv'd to Ruine or to Rule the State.
 To compass this, the Triple Bond he broke;
 The Pillars of the Publick Safety shook:
 And fitted *Israel* for a Foreign Yoke.
 Then, seiz'd with Fear, yet still affecting Fame,
 Usurp'd a Patriot's All-attoning Name.

Shadwell

(From *MacFlecknoe*)

ALL humane things are subject to decay,
 And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:
 This *Fleckno* found, who, like *Augustus*, young
 Was call'd to Empire and had govern'd long:
 In Prose and Verse was own'd, without dispute
 Through all the realms of Non-sense, absolute.
 This aged Prince now flourishing in Peace,
 And blest with issue of a large increase,
 Worn out with business, did at length debate
 To settle the Succession of the State;
 And pond'ring which of all his Sons was fit
 To Reign, and wage immortal War with Wit,
 Cry'd, 'tis resolv'd; for Nature pleads that He
 Should onely rule, who most resembles me:
 Sh—— alone my perfect image bears,
 Mature in dullness from his tender years;
 Sh—— alone of all my Sons is he
 Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
 But Sh—— never deviates into sense.
 Some beams of Wit on other souls may fall,
 Strike through and make a lucid intervall;
 But Sh——'s Genuine Night admits no Ray,
 His rising Fogs prevail upon the Day;
 Besides, his goodly Fabrick fills the Eye,
 And seems design'd for thoughtless Majesty;
 Thoughtless as Monarch-Oaks that shade the Plain,
 And spread in solemn State, supinely Reign;
 Heywood and Shirly were but Types of Thee,
 Thou last great Prophet of Tautology.

Ev'n I a Dunce of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way;
I coarsly Cloath'd in Drugget Russet, came
To teach the Nations in thy greater name.

XXXIV

ALEXANDER POPE

1688-1744

The Rape of the Lock

CANTO I

WHAT dire offence from amorous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to CARYL, Muse! is due:
This, even Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?

Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray,
And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day:
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,
And the pressed watch returned a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,
Her guardian sylph prolonged the balmy rest:
'Twas he had summoned to her silent bed

The morning-dream that hovered o'er her head;
 A youth more glittering than a birth-night beau,
 (That even in slumber caused her cheek to glow)
 Seemed to her ear his winning lips to hy,
 And thus in whispers sud, or seemed to say.
 'Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care
 Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!
 If e'er one vision touched thy infant thought,
 Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught,
 Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,
 The silver token, and the circled green,
 Or virgins visited by angel-powers,
 With golden crowns and wreaths of heavenly flowers,
 Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
 Nor bound thy narrow view to things below
 Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,
 To maids alone and children are revealed:
 What though no credit doubting wits may give!
 The fair and innocent shall still believe
 Know, then, unnumbered spirits round thee fly,
 The light militia of the lower sky
 These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,
 Hang o'er the box, and hover round the ring
 Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
 And view with scorn two pages and a chair
 As now your own, our beings were of old,
 And once inclosed in woman's beauteous mould,
 Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
 From earthly vehicles to these of air.
 Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,
 That all her vanities at once are dead;
 Succeeding vanities she still regards,
 And though she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards
 Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
 And love of ombre, after death survive
 For when the fair in all their pride expire,
 To their first elements their souls retire:

The sprites of fiery terringants in flame
Mount up, and take a salamander's name
Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
And sip, with nymphs their elemental tea
The graver pride sinks downward to a gnome,
In search of mischief still on earth to roam
The light coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air

'Know further yet, whoever fair and chaste
Rejects mankind, is by some sylph embraced
For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please
What guards the purity of melting maids,
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treacherous friend, the daring spook,
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires
When music softens, and when dancing fires?
'Tis but their sylph, the wise celestials know,
Though honour is the word with men below
'Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
For life predestined to the gnomes' embrace
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdained, and love denied
Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,
And garters, stars, and coronets appear
And in soft sounds, "Your Grace" salutes their ear
'Tis these that early tantalize the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,
Teach infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a beau

'Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
The sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,
Through all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new
What tender maid but must a victim fall

To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Daman did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from every part,
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.

This erring mortals levity may call;
Oh blind to truth! the sylphs contrive it all.

'Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear mirror of thy ruling star
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
But heaven reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warned by the sylph, oh pious maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
Beware of all, but most beware of man!'

He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leaped up, and waked his mistress with his tongue.
'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first opened on a billet-doux;
Wounds, charms, and ardours were no sooner read,
But all the vision vanished from thy head.

And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,
With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.
A heavenly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
The inferior priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride.
Unnumbered treasures ope at once, and here
The various offerings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glittering spoil.

This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
 And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
 The tortoise here and elephant unite,
 Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.
 Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
 Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux.
 Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
 The fair each moment rises in her charms,
 Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
 And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
 Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
 And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
 The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
 These set the head, and those divide the hair,
 Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
 And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

CANTO II

Not with more glories, in the ethereal plain,
 The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
 Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
 Launched on the bosom of the silver Thames.
 Fair nymphs, and well-dressed youths around her shone,
 But every eye was fixed on her alone.
 On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
 Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.
 Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
 Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those:
 Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
 Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
 Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
 And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
 Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
 Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide:
 If to her share some female errors fall,
 Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.
The adventurous Baron the bright locks admired;
He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired.
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a lover's toil attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attained his ends.

For this, ere Phoebus rose, he had implored
Propitious heaven, and every power adored,
But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;
And all the trophies of his former loves;
With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
The powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer,
The rest the winds dispersed in empty air.

But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And softened sounds along the waters die;
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay.
All but the sylph—with careful thoughts oppressed,
The impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
He summons straight his denizens of air;

The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
 Soft o'er the shrouds aerial whispers breathe,
 That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.
 Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
 Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold,
 Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
 Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light,
 Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
 Thin glittering textures of the filmy dew,
 Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
 While light disports in ever-mingling dyes,
 While every beam new transient colours flings,
 Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
 Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
 Superior by the head, was Ariel placed;
 His purple pinions opening to the sun,
 He raised his azure wand, and thus begun.
 Ye sylphs and sylphids, to your chief give ear!
 Fays, fairies, gnomes, elves, and demons, hear!
 Ye know the spheres and various tasks assigned
 By laws eternal to the aerial kind.
 Some in the fields of purest ether play,
 And bask and whiten in the blaze of day
 Some guide the course of wandering orbs on high,
 Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.
 Some less refined, beneath the moon's pale light
 Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
 Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
 Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
 Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
 Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain.
 Others on earth o'er human race preside,
 Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:
 Of these the chief the care of nations own,
 And guard with arms divine the British throne.

Our humbler province is to tend the fair,
 Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care;

To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let the imprisoned essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flowers;
To steal from rainbows ere they drop in showers
A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs,
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow

This day, black omens threat the brightest fair,
That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care;
Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight,
But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in night
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw,
Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade,
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball,
Or whether Heaven has doom'd that Shock must fall
Haste, then, ye spirits! to your charge repair.
The fluttering fan be Zephyretta's care;
The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her favourite lock,
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock

To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the petticoat
Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
Though stiff with hoops, and armed with ribs of whale:
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.

Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stopped in vials, or transfixed with pins,
Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,
Or wedged whole ages in a bodkin's eye.
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,

While clogged he beats his silken wings in vain;
 Or alum styptics with contracting power
 Shrink his thin essence like a rivelled flower:
 Or, as Ixion fixed, the wretch shall feel
 The giddy motion of the whirling mill,
 In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
 And tremble at the sea that froths below!

He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend;
 Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;
 Some thrid the mazy ringlets of her hair;
 Some hang upon the pendants of her ear:
 With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
 Anxious, and trembling for the birth of Fate.

CANTO III

Close by those meads, for ever crowned with flowers,
 Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,
 There stands a structure of majestic frame,
 Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.
 Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
 Of foreign tyrants and of nymphs at home;
 Here thou, great ANNA! whom three realms obey,
 Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.
 Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
 To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;
 In various talk the instructive hours they passed,
 Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
 One speaks the glory of the British queen,
 And one describes a charming Indian screen;
 A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
 At every word a reputation dics.
 Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
 With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.

Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
 The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
 The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
 And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;

The merchant from the Exchange returns in peace,
And the long labours of the toilet cease.
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites,
Burns to encounter two adventurous knights,
At ombre singly to decide their doom;
And swells her breast with conquests yet to come
Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,
Each band the number of the sacred nine.
Soon as she spreads her hand, the aerial guard
Descend, and sit on each important card.
First Ariel perched upon a Matadore,
Then each, according to the rank they bore,
For sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.

Behold, four kings in majesty revered,
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;
And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flower,
The expressive emblem of their softer power;
Four knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And parti-coloured troops, a shining train,
Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

The skilful nymph reviews her force with care:
Let spades be trumps! she said, and trumps they were.

Now move to war her sable Matadores,
In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.
Spadillio first, unconquerable lord!
Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.
As many more Manillio forced to yield,
And marched a victor from the verdant field.
Him Basto followed, but his fate more hard
Gained but one trump and one plebeian card.
With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,
The hoary majesty of spades appears,
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,
The rest, his many-coloured robe concealed.
The rebel knave, who dares his prince engage,

Proves the just victim of his royal rage
Even mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew,
And mowed down armies in the fights of Lu,
Said chance of war! now destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguished by the victor spade!

Thus far both armies to Belinda yield,
Now to the Baron fate inclines the field
His warlike Amazon her host invades,
The imperial consort of the crown of spades
The club's black tyrant first her victim died,
Spite of his haughty mien, and barbarous pride
What boots the regal circle on his head,
His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread,
That long behind he trails his pompous robe,
And, of all monarchs, only grasps the globe?

The Baron now his diamonds pours apace,
The embroidered king who shows but half his face,
And his refulgent queen, with powers combined,
Of broken troops an easy conquest find
Clubs, diamonds, hearts, in wild disorder seen,
With throngs promiscuous strow the level green
Thus when dispersed a routed army runs,
Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,
With like confusion different nations fly,
Of various habit, and of various dye,
The pierced battalions disunited fall,
In heaps on heaps, one fate o'erwhelms them all

The knave of diamonds tries his wily arts,
And wins (oh shameful chance!) the queen of hearts
At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,
A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look,
She sees, and trembles at the approaching ill,
Just in the jaws of ruin, and codille
And now (as oft in some distempered state)
On one nice trick depends the general fate
An ace of hearts steps forth the king unseen
Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive queen:

He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the prostrate ace
The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;
The walls, the woods, and long canals reply

O thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate,
Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.
Sudden, these honours shall be snatched away,
And cursed for ever this victorious day.

For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crowned,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;
On shining altars of Japan they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives the smoking tide:
At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipped, the fuming liquor fanned,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes displayed,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade
Coffee, (which makes the politician wise,
And see through all *things* with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the Baron's brain
New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain
Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think of Scylla's fate!
Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair!

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case:
So ladies in romance assist their knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
He takes the gift with reverence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;
Thus just behind Belinda's neck he spread,

As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head
Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair,
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear,
Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close recesses of the virgin's thought;
As on the nosegay in her breast reclined,
He watched the ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,
An earthly lover lurking at her heart
Amazed, confused, he found his power expired,
Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired

The peer now spreads the glittering forfex wide,
To inclose the lock, now joins it, to divide
Even then, before the fatal engine closed,
A wretched sylph too fondly interposed,
Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again)
The meeting points the sacred hair dis sever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!

Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend the affrighted skies
Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs breathe their last,
Or when rich Churn vessels fallen from high,
In glittering dust and painted fragments lie!

Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,
(The victor cried) the glorious prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When numerous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live!

What time would spire, from steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!
Steel could the labour of the Gods destroy,
And strike to dust the imperial towers of Troy,
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel
The conquering force of unresisted steel?

CANTO IV

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppressed,
And secret passions laboured in her breast
Not youthful kings in battle seized alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lovers robbed of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refused a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinned awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad virgin! for thy ravished hair

For, that sad moment, when the sylphs withdrew
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sullied the fair face of light,
Down to the central earth, his proper scene,
Repaired to search the gloomy Cave of Splen

Swift on his sooty pinions flits the gnome,
And in a vapour reached the dismal dome
No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,
The dreaded east is all the wind that blows
Here in a grotto, sheltered close from air,
And screened in shades from day's detested glare,
She sighs for ever on her pensive bed,
Pain at her side, and Megrim at her head

Two handmaids wait the throne alike in place,
But differing far in figure and in face.

Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,
Her wrinkled form in black and white arrayed;
With store of prayers, for mornings, nights, and noons,
Her hand is filled, her bosom with lampoons

There Affectation, with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,
Practised to lisp, and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown, for sickness, and for show.
The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease.

A constant vapour o'er the palace flies;
Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;
Dreadful, as hermit's dreams in haunted shades,
Or bright, as visions of expiring maids.
Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,
Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires:
Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
And crystal domes, and angels in machines.

Unnumbered throngs on every side are seen,
Of bodies changed to various forms by Spleen.
Here living tea-pots stand, one arm held out,
One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:
A pipkin there, like Homer's tripod, walks;
Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pye talks;
Men prove with child, as powerful fancy works,
And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks.

Safe passed the gnome through this fantastic band,
A branch of healing spleenwort in his hand.
Then thus address'd the power: 'Hail, wayward Queen!
Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen:
Parent of vapours and of female wit,
Who give the hysteric, or poetic fit,
On various tempers act by various ways,
Make some take physic, others scribble plays;
Who cause the proud their visits to delay,

And send the godly in a pet to pray.
A nymph there is, that all thy power disdains,
And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.
But oh! if e'er thy gnome could spoil a grace,
Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,
Like citron-waters matrons' cheeks inflame,
Or change complexions at a losing game;
If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,
Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds,
Or caused suspicion when no soul was rude,
Or discomposed the head-dress of a prude,
Or e'er to costive lap-dog gave disease,
Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease:
Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen.'

The Goddess with a discontented air
Seems to reject him, though she grants his prayer.
A wondrous bag with both her hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the winds;
There she collects the force of female lungs,
Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.
A vial next she fills with fainting fears,
Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.
The gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,
Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.

Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found,
Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.
Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,
And all the Furies issued at the vent.
Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.
'O wretched maid!' she spread her hands and cried,
(While Hampton's echoes, 'Wretched maid!' replied)
'Was it for this you took such constant care
The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?
For this your locks in paper durance bound,
For this with torturing irons wreathed around?

For thus with fillets strained your tender head,
 And bravely bore the double loads of lead?
 Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair,
 While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!
 Honour forbid! at whose unrivall'd shrine
 Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our sex resign.
 Methinks already I your tears survey,
 Already hear the horrid things they say,
 Already see you a degraded toast,
 And all your honour in a whisper lost!
 How shall I, then, your hapless fame defend?
 'Twill then be infamy to seem your friend!
 And shall this prize, the inestimable prize,
 Exposed through crystal to the gazing eyes,
 And heightened by the diamond's circling rays
 On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?
 Sooner shall grass in Hyde-park Circus grow,
 And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;
 Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,
 Men, monkeys, lap-dogs, parrots, perish all!"

She said; then raging to Sir Plume repair,
 And bids her beau demand the precious hair
 (Sir Plume of amber snuff-box justly vain,
 And the nice conduct of a clouded cane)
 With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
 He first the snuff-box opened, then the case,
 And thus broke out—"My Lord, why, what the devil?
 Zounds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!
 Plague on't! 'tis past a jest—nay prithee, pox!
 Give her the hair"—he spoke, and rapp'd his box
 'It grieves me much' (replied the Peer again)
 'Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.
 But by this lock, this sacred lock I swear,
 (Which never more shall join its parted hair;
 Which never more its honours shall renew,
 Clipped from the lovely head where late it grew)
 That while my nostrils draw the vital air,

This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear.
He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread
The long-contended honours of her head

But Umbriel, hateful gnome! forbears not so,
He breaks the vial whence the sorrows flow.
Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,
Her eyes half-languishing, half-drowned in tears,
On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head,
Which, with a sigh, she raised; and thus she said
‘For ever cursed be this detested day,
Which snatched my best, my favourite curl away!
Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,
If Hampton-Court these eyes had never seen!
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
By love of courts to numerous ills betrayed
Oh had I rather un-admired remained
In some lone isle, or distant northern land;
Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn ombre, none e’er taste bohea!
There kept my charms concealed from mortal eye,
Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die
What moved my mind with youthful lords to roam?
Oh had I stayed, and said my prayers at home!
’Twas this, the morning omens seemed to tell,
Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell;
The tottering China shook without a wind,
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!
A sylph too warned me of the threats of fate,
In mystic visions, now believed too late!
See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs!
My hands shall rend what ev’n thy rapine spares:
These in two sable ringlets taught to break,
Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck,
The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone,
And in its fellow’s fate foresees its own;
Uncurled it hangs, the fatal shears demands,
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands.

Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!

CANTO V

She said. the pitying audience melt in tears,
But fate and Jove had stopped the Baron's cars.
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
Not half so fixed the Trojan could remain,
While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain
Then grave Clarissa graceful waved her fan;
Silence ensued, and thus the nymph began.
'Say, why are beauties praised and honoured most,
The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast?
Why decked with all that land and sea afford,
Why Angels called, and Angel-like adored?
Why round our coaches crowd the white-gloved beaux,
Why bows the side-box from its inmost rows?
How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains:
That men may say, when we the front-box grace:
"Behold the first in virtue as in face!"
Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day;
Charmed the small-pox, or chased old-age away,
Who would not scorn what house-wife's cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?
To patch, nay ogle, might become a saint,
Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.
But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey;
Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man must die a maid;
What then remains but well our power to use,
And keep good-humour still whate'er we lose?
And trust me, dear! good-humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.

Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul.'

So spoke the dame, but no applause ensued;
Belinda frowned, Thalestris called her prude.
'To arms, to arms!' the fierce virago cries,
And swift as lightning to the combat flies,
All side in parties, and begin the attack;
Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;
Heroes' and heroines' shouts confusedly rise,
And bass and treble voices strike the skies.
No common weapons in their hands are found,
Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.

So when bold Homer makes the gods engage,
And heavenly breasts with human passions rage;
'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms,
And all Olympus rings with loud alarms:
Jove's thunder roars, heaven trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound:
Earth shakes her nodding towers, the ground gives way,
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!

Triumphant Umbriel on a scone's height
Clapped his glad wings, and sate to view the fight:
Propped on their bodkin spears, the sprites survey
The growing combat, or assist the fray.

While through the press enraged Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around from both her eyes,
A beau and witling perished in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.
'O cruel nymph! a living death I bear,'
Cried Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair.
A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
'Those eyes are made so killing'—was his last.
Thus on Macander's flowery margin lies
The expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.

When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepped in, and killed him with a frown;
She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,

But, at her smile, the beau revived again.

Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,
Weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.

See, fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,
With more than usual lightning in her eyes:
Nor feared the chief the unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.
But this bold lord with manly strength endued,
She with one finger and a thumb subdued:
Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;
The gnomes direct, to every atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust.
Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.

'Now meet thy fate,' incensed Belinda cried,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.
(The same, his ancient personage to deck,
Her great great grandsire wore about his neck,
In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,
Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown:
Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,
The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;
Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)

'Boast not my fall' (he cried) 'insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low,
Nor think, to die dejects my lofty mind:
All that I dread is leaving you behind!
Rather than so, ah let me still survive,
And burn in Cupid's flames—but burn alive.'

'Restore the lock!' she cries; and all around
'Restore the lock!' the vaulted roofs rebound.
Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain

· Roared for the handkerchief that caused his pain,

But see how oft ambitious aims are crossed,
And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost!
The lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with pun,
In every place is sought, but sought in vain
With such a prize no mortal must be blest,
So heaven decrees! with heaven who can contest?

Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,
Since all things lost on earth are treasured there
There heroes' wits are kept in ponderous vases,
And beaux' in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases
Their broken vows and death-bed aims are found
And lovers' hearts with ends of ribband bound,
The courtier's promises, and sick men's prayers,
The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,
Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry

But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise,
Though marked by none but quick, poetic eyes
(So Rome's great founder to the heavens withdrew,
To Proculus alone confessed in view)
A sudden star, it shot through liquid air,
And drew behind a radiant trail of hair
Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright,
The heavens bespangling with dishevelled light
The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
And pleased pursue its progress through the skies

This the beau monde shall from the Moll survey,
And hail with music its propitious ray.
Thus the blest lover shall for Venus take,
And send up vows from Rosamonda's lake.
Thus Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,

Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.
For, after all the murders of your eye,
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die:
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

XXXV

GEORGE CRABBE

1754-1832

Peter Grimes

OLD Peter Grimes made fishing his employ,
His wife he cabin'd with him and his boy,
And seem'd that life laborious to enjoy:
To town came quiet Peter with his fish,
And had of all a civil word and wish.
He left his trade upon the Sabbath-day,
And took young Peter in his hand to pray:
But soon the stubborn boy from care broke loose,
At first refused, then added his abuse:
His father's love he scorn'd, his power defied,
But being drunk, wept sorely when he died.

Yes! then he wept, and to his mind there came
Much of his conduct, and he felt the shame,—
How he had oft the good old man reviled,
And never paid the duty of a child;
How, when the father in his Bible read,
He in contempt and anger left the shed:
'It is the word of life,' the parent cried;
—'This is the life itself,' the boy replied;
And while old Peter in amazement stood,

Gave the hot spirit to his boiling blood:—
How he, with oath and furious speech, began
To prove his freedom and assert the man;
And when the parent check'd his impious rage,
How he had cursed the tyranny of age,—
Nay, once had dealt the sacrilegious blow
On his bare head, and laid his parent low;
The father groan'd—'If thou art old,' said he,
'And hast a son—thou wilt remember me:
Thy mother left me in a happy time,
Thou kill'dst not her—Heav'n spares the double crime.'

On an inn-settle, in his maudlin grief,
This he revolved, and drank for his relief.

Now lived the youth in freedom, but debarr'd
From constant pleasure, and he thought it hard;
Hard that he could not every wish obey,
But must awhile relinquish ale and play;
Hard! that he could not to his cards attend,
But must acquire the money he would spend.

With greedy eye he look'd on all he saw,
He knew not justice, and he laugh'd at law.
On all he mark'd, he stretched his ready hand;
He fish'd by water and he filch'd by land:
Oft in the night has Peter dropp'd his oar,
Fled from his boat, and sought for prey on shore;
Oft up the hedge-row glided, on his back
Bearing the orchard's produce in a sack,
Or farm-yard load, tugg'd fiercely from the stack;
And as these wrongs to greater numbers rose,
The more he look'd on all men as his foes.

He built a mud-wall'd hovel, where he kept
His various wealth, and there he oft-times slept;
But no success could please his cruel soul,
He wished for one to trouble and control;
He wanted some obedient boy to stand
And bear the blow of his outrageous hand;
And hoped to find in some propitious hour

A feeling creature subject to his power.

Peter had heard there were in London then,—
Still have they being!—workhouse-clearing men,
Who, undisturb'd by feelings just or kind,
Would parish-boys to needy tradesmen bind:
They in their want a trifling sum would take,
And toiling slaves of piteous orphans make.

Such Peter sought, and when a lad was found,
The sum was dealt him, and the slave was bound.
Some few in town observed in Peter's trap
A boy, with jacket blue and woollen cap;
But none inquired how Peter used the rope,
Or what the bruise that made the stripling stoop;
None could the ridges on his back behold,
None sought him shiv'ring in the winter's cold;
None put the question,—'Peter, dost thou give,
The boy his food?—What, man! the lad must live.
Consider, Peter, let the child have bread,
He'll serve thee better if he's stroked and fed.'
None reason'd thus—and some, on hearing cries,
Said calmly, 'Grimes is at his exercise.'

Pinn'd, beaten, cold, pinch'd, threaten'd, and abused—
His efforts punished and his food refused,—
Awake tormented,—soon aroused from sleep,—
Struck if he wept, and yet compell'd to weep,
The trembling boy dropp'd down and strove to pray,
Received a blow, and trembling turn'd away,
Or sobb'd and hid his piteous face;—while he,
The savage master, grinn'd in horrid glee:
He'd now the power he ever loved to show,
A feeling being subject to his blow.

Thus lived the lad, in hunger, peril, pain,
His tears despised, his supplications vain:
Compell'd by fear to lie, by need to steal,
His bed uneasy and unblest'd his meal,
For three sad years the boy his tortures bore,
And then his pains and trials were no more.

'How died he, Peter?' when the people said,
He growl'd—'I found him lifeless in his bed;'
Then tried for softer tone, and sigh'd, 'Poor Sam is dead.'
Yet murmurs were there, and some questions ask'd—
How he was fed, how punish'd, and how task'd?
Much they suspected, but they little proved,
And Peter pass'd untroubled and unmoved.

Another boy with equal ease was found,
The money granted, and the victim bound,
And what his fate?—One night it chanced he fell
From the boat's mast and perish'd in her well,
Where fish were living kept, and where the boy
(So reason'd men) could not himself destroy,—
'Yes! so it was,' said Peter, 'in his play,
(For he was idle both by night and day,)
He climb'd the main-mast and then fell below,'—
Then show'd his corpse, and pointed to the blow
'What said the jury?'—they were long in doubt,
But sturdy Peter faced the matter out:
So they dismissed him, saying at the time,
'Keep fast your hatchway when you've boys who climb.'
Thus hit the conscience, and he colour'd more
Than for the closest questions put before.

Thus all his fears the verdict set aside,
And at the slave-shop Peter still applied
Then came a boy, of manners soft and mild,—
Our seamen's wives with grief beheld the child,
All thought (the poor themselves) that he was one
Of gentle blood, some noble sinner's son,
Who had, belike, deceived some humble maid,
Whom he had first seduced and then betray'd:—
However this, he seem'd a gracious lad,
In grief submissive, and with patience sad.

Passive he labour'd, till his slender frame
Bent with his loads, and he at length was lame:
Strange that a frame so weak could bear so long
The grossest insult and the foulest wrong;

But there were causes—in the town they gave
Fire, food, and comfort, to the gentle slave;
And though stern Peter, with a cruel hand,
And knotted rope, enforced the rude command,
Yet he consider'd what he'd lately felt,
And his vile blows with selfish pity dealt.

One day such draughts the cruel fisher made,
He could not vend them in his borough-trade,
But sail'd for London-Mart: the boy was ill,
But ever humbled to his master's will;
And on the river, where they smoothly sail'd,
He strove with terror and awhile prevail'd;
But new to danger on the angry sea,
He clung affrighten'd to his master's knee:
The boat grew leaky and the wind was strong,
Rough was the passage and the time was long,
His liquor fail'd, and Peter's wrath arose,—
No more is known—the rest we must suppose,
Or learn of Peter:—Peter says, he 'spied
The stripling's danger and for harbour tried;
Meantime the fish, and then th' apprentice died.'

The pitying women raised a clamour round,
And weeping said, 'Thou hast thy 'prentice drown'd.'

Now the stern man was summon'd to the hall,
To tell his tale before the burghers all
He gave th' account; profess'd the lad he loved,
And kept his brazen features all unmoved.

The mayor himself with tone severe replied,—
'Henceforth with thee shall never boy abide;
Hire thee a freeman, whom thou durst not beat,
But who, in thy despite, will sleep and eat:
Free thou art now!—again shouldst thou appear,
Thou'lt find thy sentence, like thy soul, severe.'

Alas! for Peter not a helping hand,
So was he hated, could he now command;
Alone he row'd his boat, alone he cast
His nets beside, or made his anchor fast;

To hold a rope or hear a curse was none,—
He toil'd and rail'd; he groan'd and swore alone.

Thus by himself compell'd to live each day,
To wait for certain hours the tide's delay;
At the same times the same dull views to see,
The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree;
The water only, when the tides were high,
When low, the mud half cover'd and half-dry;
The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks;
Heaps of entangled weeds that slowly float,
As the tide rolls by the impeded boat.
When tides were neap, and, in the sultry day,
Through the tall bounding mud-banks made their way,
Which on each side rose swelling, and below
The dark warm flood ran silently and slow;
There anchoring, Peter chose from man to hide,
There hang his head, and view the lazy tide
In its hot slimy channel slowly glide;
Where the small eels that left the deeper way
For the warm shore, within the shallows play;
Where gaping mussels, left upon the mud,
Slope their slow passage to the fallen flood;—
Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace
How sidelong crabs had scrawl'd their crooked race,
Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry
Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye;
What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,
And the loud bittern, from the bull-rush home,
Gave from the salt ditch side the bellowing boom:
He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice;
Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,
Ran with a dull, unvaried, sadd'ning sound;
Where all, presented to the eye or ear,
Oppress'd the soul with misery, grief, and fear. . .

XXXVI

Madness

(From *Sir Eustace Grey*)

THERE was I fix'd, I know not how,
 Condemn'd for untold years to stay:
 Yet years were not;—one dreadful *now*
 Endured no change of night or day;
 The same mild evening's sleeping ray
 Shone softly-solemn and serene,
 And all that time I gazed away,
 The setting sun's sad rays were seen.

At length a moment's sleep stole on,—
 Again came my commission'd foes;
 Again through sea and land we're gone,
 No peace, no respite, no repose:
 Above the dark broad sea we rose
 We ran through bleak and frozen land;
 I had no strength their strength t' oppose,
 An infant in a giant's hand.

They placed me where those streamers play,
 Those nimble beams of brilliant light;
 It would the stoutest heart dismay,
 To see, to feel, that dreadful sight:
 So swift, so pure, so cold, so bright,
 They pierced my frame with icy wound,
 And all that half-year's polar night,
 Those dancing streamers wrapp'd me round.

Slowly that darkness pass'd away,
 When down upon the earth I fell,—
 Some hurried sleep was mine by day;
 But, soon as toll'd the evening bell,

They forced me on, where ever dwell
 Far-distant men in cities fair,
 Cities of whom no trav'lers tell,
 Nor feet but mine were wanderers there.
 Their watchmen stare, and stand aghast,
 As on we hurry through the dark;
 The watch-light blinks as we go past,
 The watch-dog shrinks and fears to bark;
 The watch-tower's bell sounds shrill; and, hark!
 The free wind blows—we've left the town—
 A wide sepulchral-ground I mark,
 And on a tombstone place me down.
 What monuments of mighty dead!
 What tombs of various kinds are found!
 And stones erect their shadows shed
 On humble graves, with wickers bound;
 Some risen fresh, above the ground,
 Some level with the native clay,
 What sleeping millions wait the sound,
 "Arise, ye dead, and come away!"
 Alas! they stay not for that call;
 Spare me this woe! ye demons, spare!—
 They come! the shrouded shadows all,—
 'Tis more than mortal brain can bear;
 Rustling they rise, they sternly glare
 At man upheld by vital breath;
 Who, led by wicked fiends, should dare
 To join the shadowy troops of death!
 Yes, I have felt all man can feel,
 Till he shall pay his nature's debt;
 Ills that no hope has strength to heal,
 No mind the comfort to forget:
 Whatever cares the heart can fret,
 The spirits wear, the temper gall,
 Woe, want, dread, anguish, all beset
 My sinful soul!—together all!

Those fiends upon a shaking fen
Fix'd me, in dark tempestuous night;
There never trod the foot of men,
There flock'd the fowl in wint'ry flight;
There danced the moor's deceitful light
Above the pool where sedges grow;
And when the morning-sun shone bright,
It shone upon a field of snow.

They hung me on a bough so small,
The rook could build her nest no higher;
They fix'd me on the trembling ball
That crowns the steeple's quiv'ring spire;
They set me where the seas retire,
But drown with their returning tide;
And made me flee the mountain's fire,
When rolling from its burning side.

XXXVII

ROBERT BURNS

1759-1796

Tam o' Shanter

WHEN chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neibors neibors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter—
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses
For honest men and bonnie lasses).

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A bletherin', blusterin', drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was na sober;
That ilka melder wi' the miller
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That every naig was ca'd a shoc on,
The smith and thee gat roarin' fou on;
That at the Lord's house, even on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesied that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.
Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
And aye the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi' favours secret, sweet, and precious;
The souter tauld his queereest stories;

The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy.
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure;
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!
But pleasures are like poppies spread—
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river—
A moment white, then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.
Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour, he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he takes the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:
That night, a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
While holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares.

Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
 Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.
 By this time he was cross the ford,
 Whare in the snaw the chapman smoo'd;
 And past the birks and meikle stane,
 Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
 And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
 Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
 And near the thorn, aboon the well,
 Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.
 Before him Doon pours all his floods;
 The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
 The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
 Near and more near the thunders roll:
 When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
 Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
 Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
 And loud resounded mirth and dancing.
 Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
 What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
 Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
 Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
 Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle!
 But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
 Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
 She ventur'd forward on the light;
 And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight!
 Warlocks and witches in a dance!
 Nae cotillon brent new frae France,
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
 Put life and mettle in their heels.
 A winnock-bunker in the east,
 There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast—
 A touzie tyke, black, grim, and large!
 To gie them music was his charge:
 He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,

Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.
 Coffins stood round like open presses,
 That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
 And by some devilish cantraip sleight
 Each in its cauld hand held a light,
 By which heroic Tam was able
 To note upon the haly table
 A murderer's banes in gibbet-airns;
 Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd barns;
 A thief new-cutted frae a rape—
 Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
 Five tomahawks, wi' blude red-rusted;
 Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
 A garter, which a babe had strangled;
 A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
 Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
 The gray hairs yet stack to the heft;
 Wi' mair of horrible and awefu',
 Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammy glowr'd, amaz'd, and curious,
 The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
 The piper loud and louder blew;
 The dancers quick and quicker flew;
 They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
 Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
 And coost her duddies to the wark,
 And linkit at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
 A' plump and strapping in their teens;
 Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
 Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!
 Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
 That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
 I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,
 For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
 Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,

Louping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie
There was ac winsome wench and wawlie
That night enlisted in the core,
Lang after kend on Carrick shore!
(For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear.)
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.—
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches)
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cour;
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r—
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was, and strang),
And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
And roars out 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
And in an instant all was dark!
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke
When plundering herds assail their byke,
As open pussie's mortal foes
When pop! she starts before their nose,
As eager runs the market-crowd,

When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud,
So Maggie runs; the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch skriech and hollow.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin'!
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig:
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they darena cross.
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle!
Ac spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain gray tail:
The earlin' clautht her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed;
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear;
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

XXXVIII

JAMES HOGG

1770-1835

Kilmeny

BONNIE Kilmeny gaed up the glen;
 But it wasna to meet Duneira's men,
 Nor the rosy monk of the isle to see,
 For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.
 It was only to hear the yorlin sing,
 And pu' the cress-flower round the spring;
 The scarlet hypp and the hindberryc,
 And the nut that hung frae the hazel tree;
 For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be.
 But lang may her minny look o'er the wa',
 And lang may she seek i' the green-wood shaw;
 Lang the laird o' Duneira blame,
 And lang, lang greet or Kilmeny come hame!

When many a day had come and fled,
 When grief grew calm, and hope was dead,
 When mess for Kilmeny's soul had been sung,
 When the bedesman had pray'd and the dead bell rung,
 Late, late in gloamin' when all was still,
 When the fringe was red on the westlin hill,
 The wood was sere, the moon i' the wane,
 The reek o' the cot hung over the plain,
 Like a little wee cloud in the world its lane;
 When the ingle low'd wi' an eiry leme,
 Late, late in the gloamin' Kilmeny came hame!

yorlin] yellow-hammer; hindberryc] bramble; minny] mother; greet]
 mourn; Westlin] western; its lane] alone; low'd] flamed; eiry leme]
 cery gleam.

'Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?
Lang hae we sought baith holt and den;
By linn, by ford, and green-wood tree,
Yet you are halesome and fair to see.
Where gat you that joup o' the lily scheen?
That bonnie snood of the birk sac green?
And these roses, the fairest that ever were seen?
Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?'

Kilmeny look'd up with a lovely grace,
But nae smile was seen on Kilmeny's face;
As still was her look, and as still was her e'e,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea.
For Kilmeny had been, she knew not where,
And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare;
Kilmeny had been where the cock never crew,
Where the rain never fell, and the wind never blew.
But it seem'd as the harp of the sky had rung,
And the airs of heaven play'd round her tongue,
When she spake of the lovely forms she had seen,
And a land where sin had never been;
A land of love and a land of light,
Withouten sun, or moon, or night;
Where the river swa'd a living stream,
And the light a pure celestial beam;
The land of vision, it would seem,
A still, an everlasting dream.

In yon green-wood there is a waik,
And in that waik there is a wene,
And in that wene there is a maike,
That neither has flesh, blood, nor bane;
And down in yon green-wood he walks his lane.

waterfall; joup] mantle; swa'd] swelled; waik] a row of deep damp
ss; wene] whin; maike] a mate, match, equal; his lane] alone.

In that green wene Kilmeny lay,
Her bosom happ'd wi' flowerets gay;
But the air was soft and the silence deep,
And bonnie Kilmeny fell sound asleep.
She kenn'd nae mair, nor open'd her e'e,
Till waked by the hymns of a far countrie.

She 'waken'd on a couch of the silk sac slim,
All striped wi' the bars of the rainbow's rim;
And lovely beings round were rife,
Who erst had travell'd mortal life;
And aye they smiled and 'gan to speer,
"What spirit has brought this mortal here?"—

"Lang have I journey'd, the world wide,"
A meek and reverend fere replied;
"Baith night and day I have watch'd the fair,
Eident a thousand years and mair.

Yes, I have watch'd o'er ilk degrec,
Wherever blooms feminity;
But sinless virgin, free of stain
In mind and body, fand I nane.
Never, since the banquet of time,
Found I a virgin in her prime.
Till late this bonnie maiden I saw
As spotless as the morning snaw:
Full twenty years she has lived as free
As the spirits that sojourn in this countrie:
I have brought her away frae the snares of men,
That sin or death she never may ken."—

They clasp'd her waist and her hands sae fair,
They kiss'd her cheek and they kemed her hair,
And round came many a blooming fere,
Saying, 'Bonnie Kilmeny, ye're welcome here!

happ'd] covered; speer] inquire; fere] fellow;
eident] constantly; kemed] combed.

Women are freed of the littand scorn:
 O blest be the day Kilmeny was born!
 Now shall the land of the spirits see,
 Now shall it ken what a woman may be!
 Many a lang year, in sorrow and pain,
 Many a lang year through the world we've gane,
 Commission'd to watch fair womankind,
 For it's they who nurice the immortal mind.
 We have watch'd their steps as the dawning shone,
 And deep in the green-wood walks alone;
 By lily bower and silken bed,
 The viewless tears have o'er them shed;
 Have soothed their ardent minds to sleep,
 Or left the couch of love to weep.
 We have seen! we have seen! but the time must come,
 And the angels will weep at the day of doom!

'O would the fairest of mortal kind
 Aye keep the holy truths in mind,
 That kindred spirits their motions see,
 Who watch their ways with anxious e'e,
 And grieve for the guilt of humanity!
 O, sweet to Heaven the maiden's prayer,
 And the sigh that heaves a bosom sae fair!
 And dear to Heaven the words of truth,
 And the praise of virtue frae beauty's mouth!
 And dear to the viewless forms of air,
 The minds that kyth as the body fair!

'O bonny Kilmeny! free frae stain,
 If ever you seek the world again,
 That world of sin, of sorrow and fear,
 O tell of the joys that are waiting here:
 And tell of the signs you shall shortly see;
 Of the times that are now, and the times that shall be.'
 They lifted Kilmeny, they led her away,
 And she walk'd in the light of a sunless day;

kyth] appear.

The sky was a dome of crystal bright,
The fountain of vision, and fountain of light
The emerald fields were of dazzling glow,
And the flowers of everlasting blow

Then deep in the stream her body they hid,
That her youth and beauty never might fade,
And they smiled on heaven, when they saw her lie
In the stream of life that wander'd by
And she heard a song, she heard it sung,
She kenn'd not where, but sac sweetly it rung,
It fell on the ear like a dream of the morn
'O, blest be the day Kilmeny was born'
Now shall the land of the spirits see,
Now shall it ken what a woman may be!
The sun that shines on the world sac bright,
A borrow'd gleid frae the fountain of light,
And the moon that sleeps the sky sac dun,
Like a gouden bow, or a beamless sun,
Shall wear away, and be seen nac mair,
And the angels shall miss them travelling the air
But lang, lang after baith night and day,
When the sun and the world have elyed away,
When the sinner has gane to his waesome doom,
Kilmeny shall smile in eternal bloom!—

They bore her away, she wist not how,
For she felt not arm nor rest below;
But so swift they wain'd her through the light
'Twas like the motion of sound or sight;
They seem'd to split the gales of air,
And yet nor gale nor breeze was there.
Unnumber'd groves below them grew,
They came, they pass'd, and backward flew,
Like floods of blossoms gliding on,
In moment seen, in moment gone.

gleid] spark, glow; elyed] vanished.

O, never vales to mortal view
Appear'd like those o'er which they flew!
That land to human spirits given,
The lowermost vales of the storied heaven;
From thence they can view the world below,
And heaven's blue gates with sapphires glow,
More glory yet unmeet to know.

They bore her far to a mountain green,
To see what mortal never had seen;
And they seated her high on a purple sward,
And bade her heed what she saw and heard,
And note the changes the spirits wrought,
For now she lived in the land of thought.
She look'd, and she saw nae land aright,
But an endless swirl of glory and light:
And radiant beings went and came,
Far swifter than wind, or the linked flame.
She hid her e'en frae the dazzling view;
She look'd again, and the scene was new.

She saw a sun on a summer sky,
And clouds of amber sailing bye;
A lovely land beneath her lay,
And that land had glens and mountains gray;
And that land had valleys and hoary piles,
And marlèd seas, and a thousand isles.
Its fields were speckled, its forests green,
And its lakes were all of the dazzling sheen,
Like magic mirrors, where slumbering lay
The sun and the sky and the cloudlet gray;
Which heaved and trembled, and gently swung,
On every shore they seem'd to be hung;

marlèd] variegated.

For there they were seen on their downward plain
A thousand times and a thousand again;
In winding lake and placid firth,
Little peaceful heavens in the bosom of earth.

Kilmeny sigh'd and seem'd to grieve,
For she found her heart to that land did cleave;
She saw the corn wave on the vale,
She saw the deer run down the dale;
She saw the plaid and the broad claymore,
And the brows that the badge of freedom bore;
And she thought she had seen the land before.

She saw a lady sit on a throne,
The fairest that ever the sun shone on!
A lion lick'd her hand of milk,
And she held him in a leish of silk;
And a leifu' maiden stood at her knee,
With a silver wand and melting e'e;
Her sovereign shield till love stole in,
And poison'd all the fount within.

Then a gruff untoward bedesman came,
And hundert the lion on his dame;
And the guardian maid wi' the dauntless e'e,
She dropp'd a tear, and left her knee;
And she saw till the queen frae the lion fled,
Till the bonnicest flower of the world lay dead;
A coffin was set on a distant plain,
And she saw the red blood fall like rain;
Then bonnie Kilmeny's heart grew sair,
And she turn'd away, and could look nae mair.

Then the gruff grim carle girn'd amain,
And they trampled him down, but he rose again;
And he baited the lion to deeds of weir,
Till he lapp'd the blood to the kingdom dear;

leifu'] lone, wistful; girn'd] snarled; weir] war.

And weening his head was danger-preef,
 When crown'd with the rose and clover leaf,
 He gowl'd at the carle, and chased him away
 To feed wi' the deer on the mountain gray.
 He gowl'd at the carle, and geck'd at Heaven,
 But his mark was set, and his arles given.
 Kilmeny a while her e'en withdrew;
 She look'd again, and the scene was new.

She saw before her fair unfurl'd
 One half of all the glowing world,
 Where oceans roll'd, and rivers ran,
 To bound the aims of sinful man.
 She saw a people, fierce and fell,
 Burst frae their bounds like fiends of hell;
 Their lilies grew, and the eagle flew;
 And she herked on her ravening crew,
 Till the cities and towers were wrapp'd in a blaze,
 And the thunder it roar'd o'er the lands and the seas.
 The widows they wail'd, and the red blood ran,
 And she threaten'd an end to the race of man;
 She never lened, nor stood in awe,
 Till caught by the lion's deadly paw.
 O, then the eagle swink'd for life,
 And brainyell'd up a mortal strife;
 But flew she north, or flew she south,
 She met wi' the gowl o' the lion's mouth.

With a mooted wing and waefu' maen,
 The eagle sought her eiry again;
 But lang may she cower in her bloody nest,
 And lang, lang sleek her wounded breast,
 Before she sey another flight,
 To play wi' the norland lion's might.

'd] howled; geck'd] mocked; arles] money paid on striking a
 again—fig. a beating; lened] crouched; swink'd] laboured; brainyell'd]
 at; mooted] moulted; sey] essay.

But to sing the sights Kilmeny saw,
So far surpassing nature's law,
The singer's voice wad sink away,
And the string of his harp wad cease to play.
But she saw till the sorrows of man were bye,
And all was love and harmony;
Till the stars of heaven fell calmly away,
Like flakes of snaw on a winter day.

Then Kilmeny begg'd again to see
The friends she had left in her own countrie;
To tell of the place where she had been,
And the glories that lay in the land unseen;
To warn the living maidens fair,
The loved of Heaven, the spirits' care,
That all whose ininds unmeled remain
Shall bloom in beauty when time is gane.

With distant music, soft and deep,
They lull'd Kilmeny sound asleep;
And when she awaken'd, she lay her lane,
All happ'd with flowers, in the green-wood wene.
When seven lang years had come and fled
When grief was calm, and hope was dead;
When scarce was remember'd Kilmeny's name,
Late, late in a gloamin' Kilmeny came hame!
And O, her beauty was fair to see,
But still and steadfast was her e'e!
Such beauty bard may never declare,
For there was no pride nor passion there;

And the soft desire of maiden's e'en
In that mild face could never be seen.

unmeled] unblemished; seymar] cymar, a slight covering.

Her seymar was the lily flower,
 And her cheek the moss-rose in the shower;
 And her voice like the distant melodye,
 That floats along the twilight sea.
 But she loved to raik the lanely glen,
 And keepèd afar frae the haunts of men;
 Her holy hymns unheard to sing,
 To suck the flowers, and drink the spring.
 But wherever her peaceful form appear'd,
 The wild beasts of the hill werc cheer'd;
 The wolf play'd blythly round the field,
 The lordly byson low'd and kneel'd;
 The dun deer woo'd with manner bland,
 And cower'd aneath her lily hand,
 And when at even the woodlands rung,
 When hymns of other worlds she sung
 In ecstasy of sweet devotion,
 O, then the glen was all in motion!
 The wild beasts of the forest came,
 Broke from their bughts and faulds the tame,
 And goved around, charm'd and amazed;
 Even the dull cattle croon'd and gazed,
 And murmur'd and look'd with anxious pain
 For something the mystery to explain.
 The buzzard came with the throstle-cock;
 The corby left her houf in the rock;
 The blackbird alang wi' the eagle flew;
 The hind came tripping o'er the dew;
 The wolf and the kid their raik began,
 And the tod, and the lamb, and the leveret ran;
 The hawk and the hern attour them hung,
 And the merle and the mavis forhooy'd their young;
 And all in a peaceful ring were hurl'd;
 It was like an eve in a sinless world!

e] roam; bughts] milking-pens; goved] stared, gazed; corby]
 ven; houf] haunt; tod] fox; attour] out over, forhooy'd]
 neglected.

When a month and a day had come and gane,
Kilmeny sought the green-wood wene;
There laid her down on the leaves sae green,
And Kilmeny on earth was never mair seen.
But O, the words that fell from her mouth
Were words of wonder, and words of truth!
But all the land were in fear and dread,
For they kendna whether she was living or dead.
It wasna her hame, and she couldna remain;
She left this world of sorrow and pain,
And return'd to the land of thought again.

XXXIX

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1770-1850

Michael

. . . Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and oftentimes,
When others heeded not, He heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"

And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
 The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
 Up to the mountains: he had been alone
 Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
 That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
 So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
 And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
 That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
 Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
 Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
 The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
 He had so often climbed; which had impressed
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
 Which, like a book, preserved the memory
 Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
 Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
 The certainty of honourable gain;
 Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
 Strong hold on his affections, were to him
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
 The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
 His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
 Though younger than himself full twenty years.
 He was a woman of a stirring life,
 Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
 Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
 That small, for flax; and, if one wheel had rest,
 It was because the other was at work.
 The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
 An only Child, who had been born to them
 When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
 To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
 With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
 With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,

'The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labour did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fire-side; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours

Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake;
And from this constant light, so regular,
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate, but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he

Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old,
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock,
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help,
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they

Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet, if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.

Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and, if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but
’Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know’st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman’s help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?”

At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There ’s Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar’s wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,

And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel floored
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.

We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou

First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls
 To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
 Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
 Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
 And still I loved thee with increasing love.
 Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
 Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
 First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
 While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
 Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
 And in the open fields my life was passed
 And on the mountains; else I think that thou
 Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
 But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
 As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
 Have played together, nor with me didst thou
 Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
 Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
 He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
 And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
 That these are things of which I need not speak.
 —Even to the utmost I have been to thee
 A kind and a good Father: and herein
 I but repay a gift which I myself
 Received at others' hands; for, though now old
 Beyond the common life of man, I still
 Remember them who loved me in my youth.
 Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
 As all their Forefathers had done; and, when
 At length their time was come, they were not loth
 To give their bodies to the family mould.
 I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived,
 But 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
 And see so little gain from threescore years.
 These fields were burthened when they came to me;
 Till I was forty years of age, not more
 Than half of my inheritance was mine.

I toiled and toiled, God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go.”

At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed—
“This was a work for us, and now, my Son,
It is a work for me But, lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands
Nay, Boy, be of good hope,—we both may live
To see a better day At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
I will do mine—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee.
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
To leave me, Luke thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—But I forget
My purposes Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—

When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and, when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all,
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

*Margaret**The Wanderer begins his story*

It was a plot
 Of garden-ground run wild, its matted weeds
 Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they passed,
 The gooseberry trees that shot in long lank slips,
 Or currants, hanging from their leafless stems
 In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap
 The broken wall. I looked around, and there,
 Where two tall hedgerows of thick alder boughs
 Joined in a cold damp nook, espied a well
 Shrouded with willow-flowers and plummy fern.
 My thirst I slaked, and from the cheerless spot
 Withdrawing, straightway to the shade returned
 Where sate the old man on the cottage bench;
 And while, beside him, with uncovered head,
 I yet was standing, freely to respire,
 And cool my temples in the fanning air,
 Thus did he speak—"I see around me here
 Things which you cannot see: we die, my friend,
 Nor we alone, but that which each man loved
 And prized in his peculiar nook of earth
 Dies with him, or is changed; and very soon
 Even of the good is no memorial left.
 The poets, in their elegies and songs
 Lamenting the departed, call the groves,
 They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,
 And senseless rocks; nor idly; for they speak
 In these their invocations, with a voice
 Obedient to the strong creative power
 Of human passion. Sympathies there are
 More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,
 That steal upon the meditative mind,
 And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,

And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond
Of brotherhood is broken: time has been
When, every day, the touch of human hand
Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up
In mortal stillness; and they ministered
To human comfort. Stooping down to drink,
Upon the slimy foot-stone I espied
The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,
Green with the moss of years, and subject only
To the soft handling of the elements:
There let the relic lie—fond thought—vain words
Forgive them—never did my steps approach
This humble door but she who dwelt therein
A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her
As my own child. Oh sir! the good die first,
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket. Many a passenger
Hath blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks,
When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn
From that forsaken spring; and no-one came
But he was welcome; no one went away
But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,
The light extinguished of her lonely hut,
The hut itself abandoned to decay,
And she forgotten in the quiet grave!
... 'Tis a common tale,
An ordinary sorrow of man's life,
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed
In bodily form. ..."

Childhood and School-Time(From *The Prelude*)

FAIR seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
 Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear;
 Much favour'd in my birthplace, and no less
 In that beloved Vale to which, erelong,
 I was transplanted. Well I call to mind
 ('Twas at an early age, ere I had seen
 Nine summers) when upon the mountain slope
 The frost and breath of frosty wind had snapp'd
 The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
 To wander half the night among the Cliffs
 And the smooth Hollows, where the woodcocks ran
 Along the open turf. In thought and wish
 That time, my shoulder all with springes hung,
 I was a fell destroyer. On the heights
 Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
 My anxious visitation, hurrying on,
 Still hurrying, hurrying onward; moon and stars
 Were shining o'er my head; I was alone,
 And seem'd to be a trouble to the peace
 That was among them. Sometimes it befell
 In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire
 O'erpower'd my better reason, and the bird
 Which was the captive of another's toils
 Became my prey; and, when the deed was done
 I heard among the solitary hills
 Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod.
 Nor less in springtime when on southern banks
 The shining sun had from his knot of leaves
 Decoy'd the primrose flower, and when the Vales
 And woods were warm, was I a plunderer then
 In the high places, on the lonesome peaks

Where'er, among the mountains and the winds,
The Mother Bird had built her lodge. Though mean
My object, and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble Oh! When I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill-sustain'd, and almost, as it seem'd,
Suspended by the blast which blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag; Oh! at that time,
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not a sky
Of earth, and with what motion mov'd the clouds!

The mind of Man is fram'd even like the breath
And harmony of music. There is a dark
Invisible workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, and makes them move
In one society. Ah me! that all
The terrors, all the early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, that all
The thoughts and feelings which have been infus'd
Into my mind, should ever have made up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks likewise for the means! But I believe
That Nature, oftentimes, when she would frame
A favor'd Being, from his earliest dawn
Of infancy doth open up the clouds,
As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
With gentlest visitation; not the less,
Though haply aiming at the self-same end,
Does it delight her sometimes to employ
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, and so she dealt with me.

One evening (surely I was led by her)
I went alone into a Shepherd's Boat,

A Skiff that to a Willow tree was tied
Within a rocky Cave, its usual home.
'Twas by the shores of Patterdale, a Vale
Wherein I was a Stranger, thither come
A School-boy Traveller, at the Holidays.
Forth rambled from the Village Inn alone
No sooner had I sight of this small Skiff,
Discover'd thus by unexpected chance,
Than I unloos'd her tether and embark'd.

The moon was up, the Lake was shining clear
Among the hoary mountains; from the Shore
I push'd, and struck the oars and struck again
In cadence, and my little Boat mov'd on
Even like a Man who walks with stately step
Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure; not without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my Boat move on,
Leaving behind her still on either side
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. A rocky Steep uprose
Above the Cavern of the Willow Tree
And now, as suited one who proudly row'd
With his best skill, I fix'd a steady view
Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
The bound of the horizon, for behind
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin Pinnacle; lustily
I dipp'd my oars into the silent Lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my Boat
Went heaving through the water, like a Swan;
When from behind that craggy Steep, till then
The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Uprear'd its head. I struck, and struck again,
And, growing still in stature, the huge Cliff

Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
 With measur'd motion, like a living thing,
 Strode after me With trembling hands I turn'd,
 And through the silent water stole my way
 Back to the Cavern of the Willow tree
 There, in her mooring-place, I left my Bark,
 And, through the meadows homeward went, with grave
 And serious thoughts, and after I had seen
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
 Work'd with a dim and undetermin'd sense
 Of unknown modes of being, in my thoughts
 There was a darkness, call it solitude,
 Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes
 Of hourly objects, images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,
 But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
 Like living men mov'd slowly through the mind
 By day and were the trouble of my dreams

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!
 That giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion! not in vain,
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human Soul,
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature, purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognize
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart

Nor was this fellowship vouchsaf'd to me
 With stinted kindness In November days,
 When vapours, rolling down the valleys, made
 A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods

At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling Lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
'Twas mine among the fields both day and night,
And by the waters all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows through the twilight blaz'd,
I heeded not the summons:—happy time
It was, indeed, for all of us; to me
It was a time of rapture: clear and loud
The village clock toll'd six; I wheel'd about,
Proud and exulting, like an untired horse,
That cares not for his home.—All shod with steel,
We hiss'd along the polish'd ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
The Pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din,
Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud,
The leafless trees, and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron, while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the image of a star
That gleam'd upon the ice: and oftentimes
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks, on either side,

Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
 The rapid line of motion; then at once
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
 Stopp'd short, yet still the solitary Cliffs
 Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had roll'd
 With visible motion her diurnal round;
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watch'd
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

XLII

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

1772-1834

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

In Seven Parts

PART THE FIRST

An ancient
 Mariner
 meeteth
 three Gal-
 lants bid-
 den to a
 wedding-
 feast, and
 detaineth
 one.

It is an ancient Mariner,
 And he stoppeth one of three.
 "By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
 Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
 And I am next of kin;
 The guests are met, the feast is set:
 May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
 "There was a ship," quoth he.
 "Hold off! unhand me, greybeard loon!"
 Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wed-
ding-Guest
is spell-
bound by
the eye of
the old sea-
faring man,
and con-
strained to
hear his
tale.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

The Mari-
ner tells
how the
ship sailed
southward
with a good
wind and fair
weather,
till it reached the line.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—" "
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wed-
ding-Guest
heareth the
bridal music;
but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The Bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship
drawn by a
storm to-
ward the
South Pole.

"And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

The land of
ice, and of
fearful
sounds,
where no
living thing
was to be
seen.

And now there came both mist and snow
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great
sea-bird,
called the
Albatross,
came
through the
snow-fog,
and was
received
with great
joy and
hospitality.

At length did cross an albatross:
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
 The Albatross did follow,
 And every day, for food or play,
 Came to the mariners' hollo!

And lo! the
 Albatross
 proveth a
 bird of good
 omen, and
 followeth
 the ship as
 it returned
 northward
 through fog
 and float-
 ing ice.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
 It perched for vespers nine;
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
 Glimmered the white moonshine."

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
 From fiends that plague thee thus!—
 Why look'st thou so?"—"With my cross-bow
 I shot the Albatross.

The ancient
 Mariner in-
 hospitably
 killeth the
 pious bird
 of good
 omen.

PART THE SECOND

"The Sun now rose upon the right:
 Out of the sea came he,
 Still hid in mist, and on the left
 Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
 But no sweet bird did follow,
 Nor any day for food or play
 Came to the mariners' hollo!

And I had done an hellish thing,
 And it would work 'em woe:
 For all averred, I had killed the bird
 That made the breeze to blow.
 Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
 That made the breeze to blow!

His ship-
 mates cry
 out against
 the ancient
 Mariner,
 for killing
 the bird of
 good luck.

But when
the fog
cleared off,
they justify
the same,
and thus
make them-
selves ac-
complices
in the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair
breeze con-
tinues; the
ship enters
the Pacific
Ocean and
sails north-
ward, even
till it reaches
the Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The ship
hath been
suddenly
becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Al-
batross be-
gins to be
avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
 The death-fires danced at night;
 The water, like a witch's oils,
 Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were
 Of the spirit that plagued us so;
 Nine fathom deep he had followed us
 From the land of mist and snow.

neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

A Spirit
 had follow-
 ed them;
 one of the
 invisible in-
 habitants
 of this
 planet,

And every tongue, through utter drought,
 Was withered at the root;
 We could not speak, no more than if
 We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
 Had I from old and young!
 Instead of the cross, the Albatross
 About my neck was hung.

The ship-
 mates, in
 their sore
 distress,
 would fain
 throw the
 whole guilt
 on the

ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

PART THE THIRD

"There passed a weary time. Each throat
 Was parched, and glazed each eye.
 A weary time! a weary time!
 How glazed each weary eye,
 When looking westward, I beheld
 A something in the sky.

The ancient
 Mariner be-
 holdeth a
 sign in the
 element
 afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,
 And then it seemed a mist;
 It moved and moved, and took at last
 A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a watersprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer approach it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

A flash of joy;

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?

See! See! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well-nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres!

Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun
 Did peer, as through a grate?
 And is that Woman all her crew?
 Is that a Death? and are there two?
 Is Death that woman's mate?

And its ribs
 are seen as
 bars on the
 face of the
 setting Sun.
 The Spec-
 tre-Woman
 and her
 Death-
 mate, and

no other on board the skeleton ship.

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
 Her locks were yellow as gold:
 Her skin was as white as leprosy,
 The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
 Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Like vessel,
 like crew!

The naked hulk alongside came
 And the twain were casting dice;
 'The game is done! I've won, I've won!'—
 Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

Death and
 Life-in-
 Death have
 dined for
 the ship's
 crew, and
 she (the
 latter) win-
 neth the
 ancient
 Mariner;

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
 At one stride comes the dark;
 With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
 Off shot the spectre-bark.

No twi-
 light with-
 in the
 courts of
 the Sun.

We listened and looked sideways up!
 Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
 My life-blood seemed to sip!
 The stars were dim, and thick the night,
 The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
 From the sails the dew did drip—
 Till clomb above the eastern bar
 The horned moon, with one bright star
 Within the nether tip.

At the
 rising of the
 Moon,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
 Too quick for groan or sigh,
 Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
 And cursed me with his eye.

One after
 another,

His ship-
mates drop
down dead;

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-
in-Death
begins her
work on
the ancient
Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!"

PART THE FOURTH

The Wed-
ding-Guest
feareth
that a
spirit is
talking to
him;

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

But the
ancient
Mariner as-
sureth him
of his
bodily life,
and pro-
ceedeth to
relate his
horrible
penance.
He despis-
eth the
creatures of
the calms.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—
"Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And en-
vieth that
they should
live, and so
many lie
dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they;
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

But the
curse liv-
eth for him
in the eye
of the dead
men.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

In his lone-
liness and
fixedness
he yearn-
eth to-
wards the
journeying
Moon, and

the Stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

By the light
of the Moon
he behin-
eth God's
creatures of
the great
calm.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their
beauty and
their
happiness.

He blesseth
them in his
heart.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The spell
begins to
break.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART THE FIFTH

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

By grace of
the holy
Mother, the
ancient
Mariner is
refreshed
with rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

He heareth
sounds and
seeth
strange
sights and
commo-
tions in the
sky and the
element.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship.
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

The bodies
of the
ship's crew
are inspired,
and the
ship moves
on;

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"
"Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corpses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

but not by
the souls of
the men,
nor by
daemons of
earth or
middle air,
but by a
blessed
troop of
angelic
spirits, sent
down by
the invoca-
tion of the
guardian
saint.

For when it dawned—they dropt their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then, like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

The lone-
some
Spirit from
the South
Pole car-
ries on the
ship as far
as the Line,
in obedi-
ence to the
angelic
troop, but
still re-
quireth
vengeance.

The Polar Spirit's fellow daemons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The Spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honeydew:
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."

PART THE SIXTH

First Voice

" 'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast!
What is the ocean doing?'"

Second Voice

'Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him."

First Voice

"'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

Second Voice

'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what else had been seen—

The Mariner hath
been cast
into a
trance; for
the angelic
power
causeth the
vessel to
drive
northward
faster than
human life
could en-
dure.

The super-
natural
motion is
retarded;
the Mari-
ner awakes,
and his
penance be-
gins anew.

The curse
is finally
expiated.

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

And the
ancient
Mariner be-
holdeth his
native
country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

The angelic
spirits leave
the dead
bodies, and
appear in
their own
forms of
light.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART THE SEVENTH

*The Hermit
of the wood*

"This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

*approach-
eth the ship
with won-
der.*

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks look warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owllet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—'
(The Pilot made reply)
'I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ship
suddenly
sinketh.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

The an-
cient Mari-
ner is saved
in the
Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
 Who now doth crazy go,
 Laughed loud and long, and all the while
 His eyes went to and fro.
 'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
 The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
 I stood on the firm land!
 The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
 And scarcely he could stand.

The an-
 cient Mari-
 ner earn-
 estly en-
 treateth the
 Hermit to
 shrive him;
 and the
 penance of
 life falls on
 him.

'O shrive me, shrive me, holy man!'
 The Hermit crossed his brow.
 'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
 What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
 With a woeful agony,
 Which forced me to begin my tale;
 And then it left me free.

And ever
 and anon
 throughout
 his future
 life an
 agony con-
 straineth
 him to
 travel from
 land to
 land,

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
 That agony returns:
 And till my ghastly tale is told,
 This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
 I have strange power of speech;
 That moment that his face I see,
 I know the man that must hear me:
 To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
 The wedding-guests are there:
 But in the garden-bower the Bride
 And Bride-maids singing are:

And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God Himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the Bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

and to
teach, by
his own
example,
love and
reverence
to all things
that God
made and
loveth.

XLIII

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771-1832

Flodden : The strife of death

(From *Marmion*)

THE English shafts in volleys hail'd,
In headlong charge their horse assail'd;
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep
To break the Scottish circle deep,
That fought around their King.
But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,
Unbroken was the ring;
The stubborn spear-men still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood,
The instant that he fell.
No thought was there of dastard flight;
Link'd in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
As fearlessly and well;
Till utter darkness closed her wing
O'er their thin host and wounded King.
Then skilful Surrey's sage commands
Led back from strife his shatter'd bands;
And from the charge they drew,
As mountain-waves, from wasted lands,
Sweep back to ocean blue.
Then did their loss his foemen know;
Their King, their Lords, their mightiest low,
They melted from the field as snow,
When streams are swoln and south winds blow,
Dissolves in silent dew.

Tweed's echoes heard the ceaseless plash,
While many a broken band,
Disorder'd, through her currents dash,
To gain the Scottish land;
To town and tower, to town and dale,
To tell red Flodden's dismal tale,
And raise the universal wail.
Tradition, legend, tune, and song
Shall many an age that wail prolong:
Still from the sire the son shall hear
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,
Of Flodden's fatal field,
Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear,
And broken was her shield!

XLIV

Proud Maisie

PROUD Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

"Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?"
—"When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye."

"Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie, say truly?"
—"The grey-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly."

"The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady;
The owl from the steeple sing
Welcome, proud lady!"

XLV

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

1788-1824

From *The Vision of Judgment*

SAINT Peter sat by the celestial gate:
His keys were rusty, and the lock was dull,
So little trouble had been given of late;
Not that the place by any means was full,
But since the Gallic era "eighty-eight"
The devils had ta'en a longer, stronger pull,
And "a pull together," as they say
At sea—which drew most souls another way.

The angels all were singing out of tune,
And hoarse with having little else to do,
Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,
Or curb a runaway young star or two,
Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon
Broke out of bounds o'er th' ethereal blue,
Splitting some planet with its playful tail,
As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.

The guardian seraphs had retired on high,
Finding their charges past all care below;
Terrestrial business fill'd nought in the sky
Save the recording angel's black bureau;
Who found, indeed, the facts to multiply
With such rapidity of vice and woe,
That he had stripp'd off both his wings in quills,
And yet was in arrear of human ills.

His business so augmented of late years,
That he was forced, against his will no doubt,
(Just like those cherubs, earthly ministers,)
For some resource to turn himself about,
And claim the help of his celestial peers,
To aid him ere he should be quite worn out
By the increased demand for his remarks:
Six angels and twelve saints were named his clerks.

This was a handsome board—at least for heaven;
And yet they had even then enough to do,
So many conquerors' cars were daily driven,
So many kingdoms fitted up anew;
Each day too slew its thousands six or seven,
Till at the crowning carnage, Waterloo,
They threw their pens down in divine disgust—
The page was so besmear'd with blood and dust.

This by the way; 'tis not mine to record
What angels shrink from: even the very devil
On this occasion his own work abhorr'd,
So surfeited with the infernal revel:
Though he himself had sharpen'd every sword,
It almost quench'd his innate thirst of evil.
(Here Satan's sole good work deserves insertion—
'Tis, that he has both generals in reversion.)

Let's skip a few short years of hollow peace,
Which peopled earth no better, hell as wont,
And heaven none—they form the tyrant's lease,
With nothing but new names subscribed upon't;
'T will one day finish: meantime they increase,
Like Saint John's foretold beast; but ours are born
Less formidable in the head than horn.

In the first year of freedom's second dawn
Died George the Third; although no tyrant, one
Who shielded tyrants, till each sense withdrawn
Left him nor mental nor external sun:
A better farmer ne'er brush'd dew from lawn,
A worse king never left a realm undone!
He died—but left his subjects still behind,
One half as mad—and t' other no less blind.

He died! his death made no great stir on earth:
His burial made some pomp; there was profusion
Of velvet, gilding, brass, and no great dearth
Of aught but tears—save those shed by collusion.
For these things may be bought at their true worth;
Of elegy there was the due infusion—
Bought also; and the torches, cloaks, and banners,
Heralds, and relics of old Gothic manners,

Form'd a sepulchral melodrame. Of all
The fools who flock'd to swell or see the show,
Who cared about the corpse? The funeral
Made the attraction, and the black the woe.
There throb'd not there a thought which pierced the pall;
And when the gorgeous coffin was laid low,
It seem'd the mockery of hell to fold
The rottenness of eighty years in gold.

So mix his body with the dust! It might
Return to what it *must* far sooner, were
The natural compound left alone to fight
Its way back into earth, and fire, and air;
But the unnatural balsams merely blight
What nature made him at his birth, as bare
As the mere million's base unummied clay—
Yet all his spices but prolong decay.

He's dead—and upper earth with him has done;
He's buried; save the undertaker's bill,
Or lapidary scrawl, the world is gone
For him, unless he left a German will:
But where's the proctor who will ask his son?
In whom his qualities are reigning still,
Except that household virtue, most uncommon,
Of constancy to a bad, ugly woman.

"God save the king!" It is a large economy
In God to save the like; but if he will
Be saving, all the better; for not one am I
Of those who think damnation better still:
I hardly know too if not quite alone am I
In this small hope of bettering future ill
By circumscribing, with some slight restriction,
The eternity of hell's hot jurisdiction.

I know this is unpopular; I know
'Tis blasphemous; I know one may be damn'd
For hoping no one else may e'er be so;
I know my catechism; I know we're cramm'd
With the best doctrines till we quite o'erflow;
I know that all save England's church have sham'm'd,
And that the other twice two hundred churches
And synagogues have made a *damn'd* bad purchase.

God help us all! God help me too! I am,
God knows, as helpless as the devil can wish,
And not a whit more difficult to damn,
Than is to bring to land a late-hook'd fish,
Or to the butcher to purvey the lamb;
Not that I'm fit for such a noble dish,
As one day will be that immortal fry
Of almost everybody born to die.

Saint Peter sat by the celestial gate,
And nodded o'er his keys; when, lo! there came
A wondrous noise he had not heard of late—
A rushing sound of wind, and steam, and flame;
In short, a roar of things extremely great,
Which would have made aught save a saint exclaim;
But he, with first a start and then a wink,
Said, "There's another star gone out, I think!"

But ere he could return to his repose,
A cherub flapp'd his right wing o'er his eyes—
At which St. Peter yawn'd, and rubb'd his nose:
"Saint porter," said the angel, "prithee rise!"
Waving a goodly wing, which glow'd, as glows
An earthly peacock's tail, with heavenly dyes:
To which the saint replied, "Well, what's the matter?
Is Lucifer come back with all this clatter?"

"No," quoth the cherub; "George the Third is dead."
"And who is George the Third?" replied the apostle:
"What George? what Third?" "The king of England," said
The angel. "Well! he won't find kings to jostle
Him on his way; but does he wear his head?
Because the last we saw here had a tussle,
And ne'er would have got into heaven's good graces,
Had he not flung his head in all our faces.

"He was, if I remember, king of France;
That head of his, which could not keep a crown
On earth, yet ventured in my face to advance
A claim to those of martyrs—like my own:
If I had had my sword, as I had once
When I cut ears off, I had cut him down;
But having but my *keys*, and not my brand,
I only knock'd his head from out his hand.

"And then he set up such a headless howl,
That all the saints came out and took him in;
And there he sits by St. Paul, cheek by jowl;
That fellow Paul—the parvenu! The skin
Of St. Bartholomew, which makes his cowl
In heaven, and upon earth redeem'd his sin,
So as to make a martyr, never sped
Better than did this weak and wooden head.

"But had it come up here upon its shoulders,
There would have been a different tale to tell:
The fellow-feeling in the saints beholders
Seems to have acted on them like a spell,
And so this very foolish head heaven solders
Back on its trunk: it may be very well,
And seems the custom here to overthrow
Whatever has been wisely done below."

The angel answer'd, "Peter! do not pout:
The king who comes has head and all entire,
And never knew much what it was about—
He did as doth the puppet—by its wire,
And will be judged like all the rest, no doubt:
My business and your own is not to inquire
Into such matters, but to mind our cue—
Which is to act as we are bid to do."

While thus they spake, the angelic caravan,
Arriving like a rush of mighty wind,
Cleaving the fields of space, as doth the swan
Some silver stream (say Ganges, Nile, or Inde,
Or Thames, or Tweed), and 'midst them an old man
With an old soul, and both extremely blind,
Halted before the gate, and in his shroud
Seated their fellow traveller on a cloud. . . .

XLVI

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821

The Eve of St. Agnes

I

ST. AGNES' EVE—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for Heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead on each side, seem to freeze,
Imprisoned in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flattered to tears this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his deathbell rung:
The joys of all his life were said and sung.

His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on their breasts.

V

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting facrily
The brain, new stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
 The music, yearning like a God in pain,
 She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
 Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
 Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
 Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
 And back retired; not cooled by high disdain,
 But she saw not: her heart was elsewhere:
 She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
 Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
 The hallowed hour was near at hand: she sighs
 Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
 Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
 Hoodwinked with faery fancy; all amorn,
 Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
 And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX

So, purposing each moment to retire,
 She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
 Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
 For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
 Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
 All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
 But for one moment in the tedious hours,
 That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
 Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have be

X

He ventures in: let no buzzed whisper tell:
 All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
 Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
 For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,

Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place:
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

XII

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there 's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm chair sit,
And tell me how"—"Good saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

XIII

He followed through a lowly archèd way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she muttered "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline", said he,
"O tell me Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

XIV

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
 Yet men will murder upon holy days:
 Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
 And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
 To venture so: it fills me with amaze
 To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
 God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
 This very night: good angels her deceive!
 But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

XV

Fcebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
 Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
 Who keepeth closed a wond'rous riddle-book,
 As spectaclad she sits in chimney nook.
 But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
 His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
 And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
 Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
 Made purple riot: then doth he propose
 A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
 "A cruel man and impious thou art:
 Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
 Alone with her good angels, far apart
 From wicked men like thee. Go, go—I deem
 Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

XVII

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
 Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
 When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
 If one of her soft ringlets I displace,

Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fanged than wolves and
bears."

XVIII

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never missed."—Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legioned faeries paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

XX

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates and dainties shall be storèd there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.

Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

XXI

So saying she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed;
The dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove frayed and fled.

XXIII

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
's though a tongueless nightingale should swell
hroat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

XXIV

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
 A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
 She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
 Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

XXVI

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
 Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;
 Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
 Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
 Half-hidden like a mermaid in sea-weed,
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
 In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
 In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
 Until the popped warmth of sleep oppressed
 Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away;

Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hushed carpet, silent stept,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

XXIX

Then by the bed-side where the faded moon,
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
Pina and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

XXXI

These delicacies he heaped with glowing hand
 On golden dishes and in baskets bright
 Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
 In the retired quiet of the night,
 Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
 “And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
 Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
 Open thine eyes for meek St. Agnes’ sake,
 Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

XXXII

Thus whispering, his warm, unnervèd arm
 Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
 By the dusk curtains:—’twas a midnight charm
 Impossible to melt as icèd stream:
 The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
 Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
 It seemed he never, never could redeem
 From such a stedfast spell his lady’s eyes;
 So mused awhile, entoièd in woofèd phantasies.

XXXIII

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
 Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
 He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
 In Provence called, “La belle dame sans mercy”:
 Close to her ear touching the melody;—
 Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
 He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
 Her blue affrayèd eyes wide open shone:
 Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone

XXXIV

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
 There was a painful change, that night expelled
 The blisses of her dream so pure and deep;

At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
 Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
 Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

XXXV

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
 Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
 Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
 And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
 How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
 Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
 Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
 Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
 For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
 Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
 Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose
 Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
 Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
 Th' Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII

Al. 'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
 In b. "This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
 Whi. 'Tis dark: the icèd gusts still rave and beat:
 Of ca. No dream, alas! and woe is mine!
 With rphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
 d luc'el! what traitor could thee hither bring?
 Pana are not, for my heart is lost in thine,
 's Fez gh thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
 h'n forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

XXXVIII

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
 Say, may I be for ay thy vassal blest?
 Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed?
 Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 After so many hours of toil and quest,
 A famished pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
 Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX

"Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
 Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
 Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—
 The bloated wassaillers will never heed:—
 Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
 There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
 Drowned all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
 Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
 For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
 For there were sleeping dragons all around,
 At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
 Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
 In all the house was heard no human sound.
 A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
 The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
 Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
 And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
 Like phantoms, to the iron porch they glide;
 Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flagon by his side:

The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

XLII

And they are gone: aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

XLVII

O WHAT can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a Lady in the meads,
Full beautiful, a faery's child;—
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said—
"I love thee true!"

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And then I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd,
On the cold hill-side.

I saw pale Kings and Princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gap'd wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill-side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the Lake,
And no birds sing.

XLVIII

ALFRED TENNYSON, LORD TENNYSON

1809-1892

Northern Farmer

I

WHEER 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin' 'ere aloän?
Noorse? thoort nowt o' a noorse: whoy, Doctor's abeän an'
agoän:
Says that I moänt 'a naw moor yaäle: but I beänt a fool:
Git ma my yaäle, for I beänt a-gooiin' to breäk my rule.

II

Doctors, they knaws nowt, for a says what's nawways true:
Naw soort o' koind o' use to saäy the things that a do.
I've 'ed my point o' yaäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere,
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year.

III

Parson's a beän loikewise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed,
"The amoighty's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend," a said,
An' a tow'd ma my sins, an' s toithe were due, an' I gied it in hond;
I done my duty by un, as I 'a done by the lond.

IV

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn.
But a cost oop, thot a did, 'boot Bessy Marris's barn.
Thof a knaws I hallus voäted wi' Squoire an' choorch an' staäte,
An' i' the woorst o' toimes I wur niver agin the raäte.

V

An' I hallus comed to 's choorch afoor moy Sally wor deäð,
 An' 'eerd un a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock ower my
 yeäð,
 An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd, but I thowt a 'ad summut to-
 saäy,
 An' I thowt a said what a owt to 'a said an' I comed awaäy.

VI

Bessy Marris's harn! tha knaws she laäid it to meä.
 Mowt 'a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad un, sheä.
 'Siver, I kep un, I kep un, my lass, tha mun understand;
 I done my duty by un as I 'a done by the lond.

VII

But Parson a comes an' a goos, an' a says it cäsy an' freeä,
 "The amoighty's a taäkin' o' you to 'issén, my friend," says cä.
 I weänt saäy men be loiars, thof summun said it in 'aäste:
 But a reäds wonn sarmin a wecäk, an' I 'a stubb'd Thornaby.
 waäste.

VIII

D'ya moind the waäste, my lass? naw, naw, tha was not born then;
 Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eerd un mysen;
 Moäst loike a butter-bump, for I 'eerd un aboot an' aboot,
 But I stubb'd un oop wi' the lot, an' raäved an' rembled un oot.

IX

Keäper's it wur; fo' they fun un theer a-laäid on 'is faäce
 Doon i' the woild 'enemies afoor I comed to the plaäce.
 Noäks or Thimbleby—toner 'ed shot un as deäð as a naäil:
 Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize—but git ma my yaäle.

X

Dubbut looäk at the waäste: theer warn't not feäð for a cow:
 Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looäk at it now—
 Warn't worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's lots o' feäð,
 Fourscore yows upon it and some on it doon in seäð.

XI

Nobbut a bit on it's left, an' I meän'd to 'a stubb'd it at fall,
 Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an' all,
 If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloän,
 Meä, wi' haäte oonderd haäcre o' Squoire's, an' lond o' my oän.

XII

Do godamoighty know what a's doing a-tääkin' o' meä?
 I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an' yonder a peä;
 An' Squoire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a' dear a' dear!
 And I 'a monaged for Squoire come Michaelmas thirty year.

XIII

A mowt a tääken Joänes, as 'ant a 'aäporth o' sense,
 Or a mowt 'a tääken Robins—a niver mended a fence:
 But godamoighty a moost tääke meä and tääke ma now
 Wi' auf the cows to cauve an' Thornaby holms to plow!

XIV

Looäk 'ow quoloty smoiles when they sees ma a passin' by,
 Says to thessén naw doot "what a mon a beä sewer-ly!"
 For they knows what I beän to Squoire sin fust a comed to th'
 'All;
 I done my duty by Squoire an' I done my duty by all.

XV

Squoire's in Lunnon, an' summun I reckons 'ull 'a to wroite,
 For who's to howd the lond ater meä thot muddles ma quoite;
 Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give it to Joänes,
 Noither a moänt to Robins—a niver rembles the stoäns.

XVI

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle o' steäm
 Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi' the Divil's oän teäm.
 Gin I mun doy I mun doy, an' loife they says is sweet,
 But gin I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abear to see it.

What atta stannin' theer for, an' doesn bring ma the yaäle?
 Doctor's a 'tottler, lass, an a's hallus i' the owd taäle;
 I weänt breäk rules for Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a floy;
 Git ma my yaäle I tell tha, an' gin I mun doy I mun doy.
 buzzard-clock] cockchafer; butter-bump] bittern; 'enenies] anemones.

The Passing of Arthur

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea;
 Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
 Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their Lord,
 King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
 "The sequel of to-day unsolders all
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
 Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
 They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
 Shall never more, at any future time,
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
 Walking about the gardens and the halls
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
 I perish by this people which I made,—
 Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
 To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
 I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
 That without help I cannot last till morn.

Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king:
And wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags

That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud.

"And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept,

Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.
' Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,

And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

There saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept. . . .

ROBERT BROWNING

1812-1889

The Italian in England

THAT second time they hunted me
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
 And Austria, hounding far and wide
 Her blood-hounds through the country-side
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
 I made six days a hiding-place
 Of that dry green old aqueduct
 Where I and Charles, when boys have plucked
 The fire-flies from the roof above,
 Bright creeping through the moss they love.
 —How long it seems since Charles was lost!
 Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
 The country in my very sight;
 And when that peril ceased at night,
 The sky broke out in red dismay
 With signal-fires; well, there I lay
 Close covered o'er in my recess,
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,
 And Charles's miserable end,
 And much beside, two days; the third,
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
 The peasants from the village go
 To work among the maize; you know,
 With us in Lombardy, they bring
 Provisions packed on mules, a string
 With little bells that cheer their task,
 And casks, and boughs on every cask
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
 These I let pass in jingling line,

And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew; when these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart
One instant, rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground:
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast:
Then I drew breath: they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me
Rested the hopes of Italy;
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
"I am that man upon whose head
They fix the price, because I hate
The Austrians over us: the State

Will give you gold—oh, gold so much,
If you betray me to their clutch
And be your death, for aught I know,
If once they find you saved their foe.
Now, you must bring me food and drink,
And also paper, pen and ink,
And carry safe what I shall write
To Padua, which you'll reach at night
Before the Duomo shuts; go in,
And wait till Tenebrae begin;
Walk to the Third Confessional,
Between the pillar and the wall,
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
Say it a second time, then cease;
And if the voice inside returns,
From Christ and freedom; what concerns
The cause of Peace?—for answer, slip
My letter where you placed your lip;
Then come back happy we have done
Our mother service—I, the son,
As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming: we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much"—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others who
Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived

To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—"This faith was shown
To Italy, our mother; she
Uses my hand and blesses thee!"
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, nothing could convince
My inmost heart I had a friend.
However, if it pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be;
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands: and next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers: last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise; while some opine

"Freedom grows Licence," some suspect
"Haste breeds Delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All 's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think, then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt; what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,—
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now!

LI

Porphyria's Lover

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listen'd with heart fit to break

When glided in Porphyria; straight
 She shut the cold out and the storm,
 And kneel'd and made the cheerless grate
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
 Which done, she rose, and from her form
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl
 And laid her soil'd gloves by, untied
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
 And, last, she sat down by my side
 And call'd me. When no voice replied,
 She put my arm about her waist,
 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
 And all her yellow hair displaced,
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
 And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
 Murmuring how she loved me—she
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
 To set its struggling passion free
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
 And give herself to me for ever.
 But passion sometimes would prevail,
 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
 A sudden thought of one so pale
 For love of her, and all in vain:
 So, she was come through wind and rain.
 Be sure I look'd up at her eyes
 Happy and proud; at last I knew
 Porphyria worshipp'd me; surprise
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew
 While I debated what to do.
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good: I found
 A thing to do, and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound
 Three times her little throat around,
 And strangled her. No pain felt she;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,
 I warily oped her lids: again
 Laugh'd the blue eyes without a stain.
 And I untighten'd next the tress
 About her neck; her cheek once more
 Blush'd bright beneath my burning kiss:
 I propp'd her head up as before,
 Only, this time my shoulder bore
 Her head, which droops upon it still:
 The smiling rosy little head,
 So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorn'd at once is fled,
 And I, its love, am gain'd instead!
 Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
 And thus we sit together now,
 And all night long we have not stirr'd,
 And yet God has not said a word!

LII

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1822-1888

FROM *Sohrab and Rustum*

. . . AND then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
 The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand . . .

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
 And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
 And follow'd her to find her where she fell
 Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back

From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyrv, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by.—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,—
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not
But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said —
“What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—
“Ah yes, he had and that lost son am I
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here,
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee
Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old King, her father, who grows grey
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn

That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:

So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms;
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon: tears gather'd in his eyes;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries
A far bright City, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds;—so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old King, her father, who lov'd well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,

Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said:—

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
But one—a girl: who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

So Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
And rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

“Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks;
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud:
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

“Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.
If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd
His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,
And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,

Pricks with vermillion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands.—
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal
It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks
Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign
And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—

“How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?”

He spoke, but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—
O Boy—thy Father!—and his voice chok'd there.
And then a cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life and life
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror, and he seiz'd
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms:
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs chok'd him; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said:—

“Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written down

In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it: but Fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engag'd
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this: I find
My father; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say, *My Son!*
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be."

So said he: and his voice releas'd the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other mov'd
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—

"Ruksh, now thou grieve'st; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy Master to this field."

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—
"Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed!
My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.

O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home,
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
 Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
 Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
 And said—"O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!"—but I
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
 Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
 The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream—
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

And with a heavy groan, Rustum replied:—
 "Oh that its waves were flowing over me!
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"

And with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—
 "Desire not that, my father; thou must live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
 And reap a second glory in thine age.
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come: thou seest this great host of men
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:
 Let me entreat for them: what have they done?
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,

But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—
"Fear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be: for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host: yea, let them go:
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine; and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;

And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.*—
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age;
And I shall never end this life of blood.”

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—
“A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now:
Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.”

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said:—
“Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.”

He spoke; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and cas'd
His wound's imperious anguish: but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By romping children, whom their nurses call
From the hot fields at noon: his head droop'd low,
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.

And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog: for now
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal:
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward; the Tartars by the river marge:
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic River floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,
Under the solitary moon: he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

LIII

WILLIAM MORRIS

1834-1896

Two Red Roses across the Moon

THERE was a lady lived in a hall,
Large of eyes and slim and tall;
And ever she sang from noon to noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

There was a knight came riding by
In early spring, when the roads were dry
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Yet none the more he stopped at all,
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;
And left that lady singing at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,
And the scarlet and gold had got to be met,
He rode on the spur till the next warm noon;
Two red roses across the moon.

But the battle was scattered from hill to hill,
From the windmill to the watermill;
And he said to himself, as it neared the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

You scarce could see for the scarlet and blue,
A golden helm or a golden shoe;
So he cried, as the fight grew thick at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Verily then the gold bore through
The huddled spears of the scarlet and blue;
And they cried, as they cut them down at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

I trow he stopped when he rode again
By the hall, though draggled sore with the rain;
And his lips were pinched to kiss at the noon
Two red roses across the moon.

Under the may she stooped to the crown,
All was gold, there was nothing of brown,
And the horns blew up in the hall at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

LIV

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

1828-1882

The Blessed Damozel

THE blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Her-seemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
... Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face . . .
Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;

Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! we two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five hand maidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;

Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-ropes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love,—only to be
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

RUDYARD KIPLING

1865-1936

The Explorer

THERE'S no sense in going further—it's the edge of cultivation,"
 o they said, and I believed it—broke my land and sowed my
 crop—
 built my barns and strung my fences in the little border station
 Tucked away below the foothills where the trails run out and
 stop:

ill a voice, as bad as Conscience, rang interminable changes
 On one everlasting Whisper day and night repeated—so:
 Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the
 Ranges—
 "Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you.
 Go!"

io I went, worn out of patience; never told my nearest neigh-
 bours—
 Stole away with pack and ponies—left 'em drinking in the
 town;
 And the faith that moveth mountains didn't seem to help my
 labours
 As I faced the sheer main-ranges, whipping up and leading
 down.

March by march I puzzled through 'em, turning flanks and dodging
 shoulders,
 Hurried on in hope of water, headed back for lack of grass;
 Till I camped above the tree-line—drifted snow and naked
 boulders—
 Felt free air astir to windward—knew I'd stumbled on the Pass.

'Thought to name it for the finder: but that night the Norther
found me—

Froze and killed the plains-bred ponies; so I called the camp
Despair

(It's the Railway Gap today, though). Then my Whisper waked
to hound me:—

"Something lost behind the Ranges. Over yonder! Go you
there!"

Then I knew, the while I doubted—knew His Hand was certain
o'er me,

Still—it might be self-delusion—scores of better men had died—
I could reach the township living, but . . . He knows what terror
tore me . . .

But I didn't . . . but I didn't. I went down the other side,

Till the snow ran out in flowers, and the flowers turned to aloes,

And the aloes sprung to thickets and a brimming stream ran by;
But the thickets dwined to thorn-scrub, and the water drained to
shallows,

And I dropped again on desert—blasted earth, and blasting
sky . . .

I remember lighting fires; I remember sitting by 'em;

I remember seeing faces, hearing voices, through the smoke;

I remember they were fancy—for I threw a stone to try 'em.

"Something lost behind the Ranges" was the only word they
spoke.

I remember going crazy. I remember that I knew it

When I heard myself hallooing to the funny folk I saw.

'Very full of dreams that desert, but my two legs took me through
it . . .

And I used to watch 'em moving with the toes all black and
raw. . .

But at last the country altered—White Man's country past disputing—

Rolling grass and open timber, with a hint of hills behind—
There I found me food and water, and I lay a week recruiting.
Got my strength and lost my nightmares. Then I entered on my find.

Thence I ran my first rough survey—chose my trees and blazed and ringed 'em—

Week by week I pried and sampled—week by week my findings grew.
Saul he went to look for donkeys, and by God he found a kingdom!

But by God, who sent His Whisper, I had struck the worth of two!

Up along the hostile mountains, where the hair-poised snow-slide shivers—

Down and through the big fat marshes that the virgin ore-bed stains,
Till I heard the mile-wide mutterings of unimagined rivers,
And beyond the nameless timber saw illimitable plains!

'Plotted sites of future cities, traced the easy grades between 'em;
Watched unharnessed rapids wasting fifty thousand head an hour;

Counted leagues of water-frontage through the axe-ripe woods that screen 'em—
Saw the plant to feed a people—up and waiting for the power!

Well I know who'll take the credit—all the clever chaps that followed—

Came, a dozen men together—never knew my desert-fears;
Tracked me by the camps I'd quitted, used the water-holes I'd hollowed.

They'll go back and do the talking. *They'll* be called the Pioneers!

They will find my sites of townships—not the cities that I set there.

They will rediscover rivers—not my rivers heard at night.
By my own old marks and bearings they will tell me how to get there,

By the lonely cairns I builded they will guide my feet aright.

Have I named one single river? Have I claimed one single acre?

Have I kept one single nugget—(barring samples)? No, not I!
Because my price was paid me ten times over by my Maker.

But you wouldn't understand it. You go up and occupy.

Ores you'll find there; wood and cattle; water-transit sure and steady

(That should keep the railway-rates down), coal and iron at your doors.

God took care to hide that country till He judged His people ready,

Then He chose me for His Whisper, and I've found it, and it's yours!

Yes, your "Never-never country"—yes, your "edge of cultivation"

And "no sense in going further"—till I crossed the range to see.
God forgive me! No, *I* didn't. It's God's present to our nation.

Anybody might have found it, but—His Whisper came to Me!

LVI

G. K. CHESTERTON

1872-1936

Ethandune: The Last Charge

(From *Ballad of the White Horse*)

. . . GREY twilight and a yellow star
Hung over thorn and hill;
Two spears and a cloven war-shield lay
Loose on the road as cast away,
The horn died faint in the forest grey,
And the fleeing men stood still.

"Brothers at arms," said Alfred,
"On this side lies the foe;
Are slavery and starvation flowers,
That you should pluck them so?

"For whether is it better
To be prodded with Danish poles,
Having hewn a chamber in a ditch,
And hounded like a howling witch,
Or smoked to death in holes?

"Or that before the red cock crow
All we, a thousand strong,
Go down the dark road to God's house,
Singing a Wessex song?

"To sweat a slave to a race of slaves,
To drink up infamy?
No, brothers, by your leave, I think
Death is a better ale to drink,
And by all the stars of Christ that sink,
The Danes shall drink with me.

“To grow old cowed in a conquered land,
With the sun itself discrowned,
To see trees crouch and cattle slink—
Death is a better ale to drink,
And by high Death on the fell brink,
That flagon shall go round.

“Though dead are all the paladins
Whom glory had in ken,
Though all your thunder-sworded thanes
With proud hearts died among the Danes,
While a man remains, great war remains:
Now is a war of men.

“The men that tear the furrows,
The men that fell the trees,
When all their lords be lost and dead
The bondsmen of the earth shall tread
The tyrants of the seas.

“The wheel of the roaring stillness
Of all labours under the sun,
Speed the wild work as well at least
As the whole world’s work is done.

“Let Hildred hack the shield-wall
Clean as he hacks the hedge;
Let Gurth the fowler stand as cool
As he stands on the chasm’s edge;

“Let Gorlias ride the sea-kings
As Gorlias rides the sea,
Then let all hell and Denmark drive,
Yelling to all its fiends alive,
And not a rag care we.”

When Alfred’s word was ended
Stood firm that feeble line,
Each in his place with club or spear,
And fury deeper than deep fear,
And smiles as sour as brine.

And the King held up the horn and said,
 "See ye my father's horn,
That Egbert blew in his empery,
Once, when he rode out commonly,
Twice when he rode for venery,
 And thrice on the battle-morn.

 "But heavier fates have fallen
The horn of the Wessex kings,
And I blew once, the riding sign,
To call you to the fighting line
 And glory and all good things.

 "And now two blasts, the hunting sign,
Because we turn to bay;
But I will not blow the three blasts,
Till we be lost or they.

 "And now I blow the hunting sign,
Charge some by rule and rod,
But when I blow the battle sign,
Charge all and go to God."

Wild stared the Danes at the double ways
 Where they loitered, all at large,
As that dark line for the last time
 Doubled the knee to charge—

And caught their weapons clumsily,
 And marvelled how and why—
In such degree, by rule and rod,
The people of the peace of God
 Went roaring down to die.

And when the last arrow
 Was fitted and was flown,
When the broken shield hung on the breast,
And the hopeless lance was laid in rest,
 And the hopeless horn blown,

The King looked up, and what he saw
Was a great light like death,
For Our Lady stood on the standards rent,
As lonely and as innocent
As when between white walls she went
And the lilies of Nazareth.

One instant in a still light
He saw Our Lady then,
Her dress was soft as western sky,
And she was a queen most womanly—
But she was a queen of men.

Over the iron forest
He saw Our Lady stand,
Her eyes were sad withouten art,
And seven swords were in her heart—
But one was in her hand.

Then the last charge went blindly,
And all too lost for fear:
The Danes closed round, a roaring ring,
And twenty clubs rose o'er the King,
Four Danes hewed at him, halloing,
And Ogier of the Stone and Sling
Drove at him with a spear.

But the Danes were wild with laughter,
And the great spear swung wide,
The point stuck to a straggling tree,
And either host cried suddenly,
As Alfred leapt aside.

Short time had shaggy Ogier
To pull his lance in line—
He knew King Alfred's axe on high,
He heard it rushing through the sky,

He cowered beneath it with a cry—
It split him to the spine:
And Alfred sprang over him dead,
And blew the battle sign.

Then bursting all and blasting
Came Christendom like death,
Kicked of such catapults of will,
The staves shiver, the barrels spill,
The waggons waver and crash and kill
The waggoners beneath.

Barriers go backwards, banners rend,
Great shields groan like a gong—
Horses like horns of nightmare
Neigh horribly and long.

Horses ramp high and rock and boil
And break their golden reins,
And slide on carnage clamorously,
Down where the bitter blood doth lie,
Where Ogier went on foot to die,
In the old way of the Danes.

"The high tide!" King Alfred cried.
"The high tide and the turn!
As a tide turns on the tall grey seas,
See how they waver in the trees,
How stray their spears, how knock their knees,
How wild their watchfires burn!

"The Mother of God goes over them,
Walking on wind and flame,
And the storm-cloud drifts from city and dale,
And the White Horse stamps in the White Horse Vale,
And we all shall yet drink Christian ale
In the village of our name.

“The Mother of God goes over them,
On dreadful cherubs borne;
And the psalm is roaring above the rune,
And the Cross goes over the sun and moon,
Endeth the battle of Ethandune
With the blowing of a horn.”

For back indeed disorderly
The Danes went clamouring,
Too worn to take anew the tale,
Or dazed with insolence and ale,
Or stunned of Heaven, or stricken pale
Before the face of the King.

For dire was Alfred in his hour
The pale scribe witnesseth,
More mighty in defeat was he
Than all men else in victory,
And behind, his men came murderously,
Dry-throated, drinking death. . . .

LVII

JOHN MASEFIELD

From *Dauber*

THOSE from the yard came down to tell the tale.
“He almost had me off,” said Tom. “He slipped.
There came one hell of a jump-like from the sail . . .
He clutched at me, and almost had me pipped.
He caught my ’ris’band, but the oilskin ripped . . .
It tore clean off. Look here. I was near gone.
I made a grab to catch him; so did John.

"I caught his arm. My God! I was near done.
He almost had me over; it was near.
He hit the ropes and grabbed at every one."
"Well," said the Mate, "we cannot leave him here.
Run, Si, and get the half-deck table clear.
We'll lay him there. Catch hold there, you, and you.
He's dead, poor son; there's nothing more to do."

Night fell, and all night long the Dauber lay
Covered upon the table; all night long
The pitiless storm exulted at her prey,
Huddling the waters with her icy thong.
But to the covered shape she did no wrong.
He lay beneath the sailcloth. Bell by bell,
The night wore through; the stars rose, the stars fell.

Blowing most pitiless cold out of clear sky
The wind roared all night long; and all night through
The green seas on the deck went washing by,
Flooding the half-deck; bitter hard it blew.
But little of it all the Dauber knew—
The sopping bunks, the floating chests, the wet
The darkness, and the misery, and the sweat.

He was off duty. So it blew all night,
And when the watches changed the men would come
Dripping within the door to strike a light
And stare upon the Dauber lying dumb,
And say, "He come a cruel thump, poor chum."
Or, "He'd a-been a fine big man"; or, "He . . .
A smart young seaman he was getting to be."

Or, "Damn it all, it's what we've all to face! . . .
I knew another fellow one time . . ." then
Came a strange tale of death in a strange place
Out on the sea, in ships, with wandering men.
In many ways Death puts us into pen.
The reefers came down tired and looked and slept.
Below the skylight little dribbles crept .

Along the painted woodwork, glistening, slow,
Following the roll and dripping, never fast,
But dripping on the quiet form below,
Like passing time talking to time long past.
And all night long, "Ai, ai!" went the wind's blast,
And creaming water swished below the pale,
Unheeding body stretched beneath the sail.

At dawn they sewed him up, and at eight bells
They bore him to the gangway, wading deep,
Through the green-clutching, white-toothed water-hells
That flung his carriers over in their sweep.
They laid an old red ensign on the heap,
And all hands stood bare-headed, stooping, swaying,
Washed by the sea while the old man was praying

Out of a borrowed prayer-book. At a sign
They twitched the ensign back and tipped the grating.
A creamier bubbling broke the bubbling brine.
The muffled figure tilted to the weighting;
It dwindled slowly down, slowly gyrating.
Some craned to see; it dimmed, it disappeared;
The last green milky bubble blinked and cleared.

"Mister, shake out your reefs," the Captain called.
"Out topsail reefs!" the Mate cried; then all hands
Hurried, the great sails shook, and all hands hauled,
Singing that desolate song of lonely lands,
Of how a lover came in dripping bands,
Green with the wet and cold, to tell his lover
That Death was in the sea, and all was over.

Fair came the falling wind; a seaman said
The Dauber was a Jonah; once again
The clipper held her course, showing red lead,
Shattering the sea-tops into golden rain.
The waves bowed down before her like blown grain;
Onwards she thundered, on; her voyage was short,
Before the tier's bells rang her into port.

Cheerly they rang her in, those beating bells,
The new-come beauty stately from the sea,
Whitening the blue heave of the drowsy swells,
Treading the bubbles down. With three times three
They cheered her moving beauty in, and she
Came to her berth, so noble, so superb;
Swayed like a queen, and answered to the curb.

Then in the sunset's flush they went aloft,
And unbent sails in that most lovely hour
When the light gentles and the wind is soft,
And beauty in the heart breaks like a flower.
Working aloft they saw the mountain tower,
Snow to the peak; they heard the launchmen shout;
And bright along the bay the lights came out.

And then the night fell dark, and all night long
The pointed mountain pointed at the stars,
Frozen, alert, austere; the eagle's song
Screamed from her desolate screes and splintered scars.
On her intense crags where the air is sparse
The stars looked down; their many golden eyes
Watched her and burned, burned out, and came to rise.

Silent the finger of the summit stood,
Icy in pure, thin air, glittering with snows.
Then the sun's coming turned the peak to blood,
And in the rest-house the muleteers arose,
And all day long, where only the eagle goes,
Stones, loosened by the sun, fall; the stones falling
Fill empty gorge on gorge with echoes calling.

LVIII

From *Reynard the Fox*

FOR a minute he ran and heard no sound,
 Then a whimper came from a questing hound,
 Then a "This way, beauties," and then "Leu, Leu,"
 The floating laugh of the horn that blew
 Then the cry again, and the crash and rattle
 Of the shrubs burst back as they ran to battle,
 Till the wood behind seemed risen from root,
 Crying and crashing, to give pursuit,
 Till the trees seemed hounds and the air seemed cry,
 And the earth so far that he needs must die,
 Die where he reeled in the woodland dun,
 With a hound's white grips in the spine of him
 For one more burst he could spurt, and then
 Wait for the teeth, and the wrench, and men

* * * * *

He thought as he ran of his old delight
 In the wood in the moon in an April night,
 His happy hunting, his winter loving,
 The smells of things in the midnight roving,
 The look of his dainty-nosing, red,
 Clean-felled dam with her footpad's tread,
 Of his sire, so swift, so game, so cunning,
 With craft in his brain and power of running,
 Their fights of old when his teeth drew blood,
 Now he was sick, with his coat all mud

* * * * *

He crossed the covert, he crawled the bank,
 To a meuse in the thorns, and there he sank,
 With his ears flexed back and his teeth shown white,
 In a rat's resolve for a dying bite
 And there, as he lay, he saw the vale,
 That a struggling sunlight silvered pale:

The Deetlip Brook like a strip of steel,
The Nun's Wood Yews where the rabbits squeal,
The great grass square of the Roman Fort,
And the smoke in the elms at Crendon Court.
And above the smoke in the elm-tree tops
Was the beech-clump's blur, Blown Hiltote Copse,
Where he and his mates had long made merry
In the bloody joys of the rabbit-herry.
And there as he lay and looked, the cry
Of the hounds at head came rousing by;
He bent his bones in the blackthorn dim.

* * * * *

But the cry of the hounds was not for him.
Over the fence with a crash they went,
Belly to grass, with a burning scent;
Then came Dansey, yelling to Bob:
"They've changed! O damn it! now here's a job."
And Bob yelled back: "Well, we cannot turn 'em,
It's Jumper and Antic, Tom, we'll learn 'em!
We must just go on, and I hope we kill."
They followed hounds down the Mourne End Hill.

* * * * *

The fox lay still in the rabbit-meuse,
On the dry brown dust of the plumes of yews.
In the bottom below a brook went by,
Blue, in a patch, like a streak of sky.
There one by one, with a clink of stone,
Came a red or dark coat on a horse half-blown.
And man to man with a gasp for breath
Said: "Lord, what a run! I'm fagged to death."

* * * * *

After an hour no riders came,
The day drew by like an ending game;
A robin sang from a puffr red breast,
The fox lay quiet and took his rest.

A wren on a tree-stump carolled clear,
Then the starlings wheeled in a sudden sheer,
The rooks came home to the twiggy hive
In the elm-tree tops which the winds do drive.
Then the noise of the rooks fell slowly still,
And the lights came out in the Clench Brook Mill;
Then a pheasant cocked, then an owl began,
With the cry that curdles the blood of man. . . .
The stars grew bright as the yews grew black,
The fox rose stiffly and stretched his back.
He flaired the air, then he padded out
To the valley below him, dark as doubt,
Winter-thin with the young green crops,
For old Cold Crendon and Hileote Copse . . .
The stars grew bright in the winter sky,
The wind came keen with a tang of frost,
The brook was troubled for new things lost,
The copse was happy for old things found,
The fox came home and he went to ground.

* * * * *

And the hunt came home and the hounds were fed,
They climbed to their bench and went to bed;
The horses in stable loved their straw.
"Good-night, my beauties," said Robin Dawe.
Then the moon came quiet and flooded full
Light and beauty on clouds like wool,
On a feasted fox at rest from hunting,
In a beech-wood grey where the brocks were grunting.

* * * * *

The beech-wood grey rose dim in the night
With moonlight fallen in pools of light,
The long dead leaves on the ground were rimed;
A clock struck twelve and the church-bells chimed.

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